

TERRORISM IN

THE MAGHREB

**THE TRANSNATIONALISATION OF
DOMESTIC TERRORISM**

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Disclaimer

The author has been researching terrorism in this region for a number of years. The intention is not to be controversial, but rather to stimulate constructive discussion on a topic that can only be described as 'sensitive' in the region. The following monograph represents the opinions of the author and not that of the Institute for Security Studies (ISS).

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

In most cases the English versions of the generally French or Arabic names are given

ACB	Algerian Community in Great Britain
AIS	Islamic Salvation Army
ANP	National People's Army or People's National Army
AQLIM	Al-Qa'eda Organisation for the Land of the Islamic Maghreb
AS	Moroccan Youth Association
AU	African Union
BRC	Brown and Root-Condor
DGED	General Directorate of Studies and Documentation (Moroccan Secret Service)
DST	Moroccan Territorial Surveillance Directorate
FIDA	Islamic Front for Armed Jihad
FIS	Islamic Salvation Front
FIT	Tunisian Islamic Front
FFS	Front of Socialist Forces
FLN	National Liberation Front
GIA	Armed Islamic Group
GICM	Moroccan Islamic Combat Group

GLD	Legitimate Defence Groups
GSC	Salafist Combat Group
GSD	Salafist Group for Jihad
GSPC	Salafist Group for Combat and Preaching
<i>Hadith</i>	Recollection of the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad
Hamas	<i>Harakat al-Mujtam'a al-Islam</i>
HATM	Moroccan Movement for Reform and Renewal
HDS	Defenders of Salafist Preaching
IED	Improvised explosive device
ILP	Islamic Liberation Party
LFG	Libyan Islamic Fighting Group
MDA	Movement for Democracy in Algeria
MDJT	Movement for Democracy and Justice
MEI	Movement of the Islamic State in Algeria
MIA	Armed Islamic Movement
MTI	Islamic Tendency Movement
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organisation
<i>Shari'a</i>	Islamic law
<i>Sunna</i>	Traditions (practices) of the Prophet Muhammad
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Terrorism on the African continent is a complex and emotional topic. One of the primary reasons for this is that a historical introspection for any country, or its people, that has been confronted with a conflicting past can only be described as 'sensitive'. In addition to international developments and challenges, domestic circumstances predominately fuel domestic terrorism. It will therefore be a mistake to assess the threat of terrorism in any country in historic isolation. This is particularly true when one tries to assess and understand the 'renewed' threat of terrorism in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia.

This monograph will attempt to place the threat and implication of the name change announcement of the Salafist Group for Combat and Preaching (GSPC) to al-Qa'eda in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb (AQLIM) in context, with the primary focus on events in 2007. The name change in itself implied that the original domestic group had transnational ambitions, but what influenced this development and what would the consequences be? Although this development led to immediate and extensive international interest in the Maghreb, it became clear that most assessments focused on the now, without appreciating the historical complexities that ultimately led to this development.

In conducting a historical assessment, one can appreciate that while all three countries under review were confronted with similar challenges after independence, each country reacted in a different manner, which impacted on the manifestation and magnitude of the threat of terrorism and the eventual impact of the transnationalisation of domestic terrorism on transnational terrorism. Even the way independence was gained impacted on the psychological acceptance of violence as an acceptable strategy.

The first chapter of the monograph serves as an introduction, providing the scope of analysis, definitions of terrorism as provided by regional organisations, and the legal approaches of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia in dealing with the threat of terrorism. This is followed by a brief introduction to Salafism and Wahhabism as a prologue to the philosophical background of the organisations that will be discussed in later chapters.

Chapter 2 provides a brief overview of the underlying political, socio-economic and cultural factors that influenced the formation of fundamentalist, and later extremist, organisations in Algeria, followed by an overview of the primary organisations that influenced the gradual escalation of violence. The main focus will, however, be on the GSPC – its structure and activities, the influence of *al-Qa'eda* in the establishment of the GSPC and *al-Qa'eda*'s ever-increasing influence in the organisation. This is followed by a discussion on the implications that the name change had on the GSPC's tactics, reach of activities and structure.

Although Morocco was faced with similar domestic challenges and international developments, the monarchy was recognised by the majority of the population. This impacted on the ability of fundamentalist and extremist organisations to get a foothold in the country. Chapter 3, similar to the discussion on Algeria, provides an overview of the primary role-players. The suicide bombings in Casablanca in 2003 served as a wake-up call that a number of smaller cells did not recognise the monarchy, further driven by international injustices and poor socio-economic conditions. In contrast to the better structured organisations in Algeria, the suicide bombings in 2007 signified the potential threat of small cells, often involving members of the same family, close friends and individuals formerly incarcerated for their alleged lesser involvement in the 2003 bombings and other offences such as drug trafficking. In addition to poor socio-economic conditions, the state's reaction to the 2003 bombings demonstrated the negative impact that counter-terrorism strategies have on the radicalisation process.

Tunisia was also initially confronted with similar broad challenges as presented in the chapters dealing with Algeria and Morocco. Similar to the Algerian experience in which a religious-based party attempted to gain political power through participating in the political process, the Islamic Tendency Movement (MTI) in Tunisia attempted the same strategy. But the MTI, which changed its name to *Harakat an-Nahda*, overestimated its strength while underestimating the strength of the new government of President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali. Notwithstanding a number of attacks, the Tunisian government managed to contain the threat through a dual strategy: arrest and convict those involved while at the same time addressing the underlying causes, namely poor socio-economic conditions and education. During a period of calm, extremists from Tunisia had to either leave for Europe or provide assistance to extremists in neighbouring Algeria.

Chapter 5 provides insight into the spread, threat and impact of extremists originally from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia in emerging networks in

Europe. Under the protection of political asylum, extremists used freedoms of religion, speech and assembly in Europe to establish support networks for operations in their countries of origin. In addition to these support networks, individuals also resorted to crime to support their operations. Ultimately, these networks turned against their host countries. Besides a few attacks in the 1990s, the events of 9/11 and the subsequent United States' invasion of Iraq in particular led to a new resolve and the involvement of nationals of these countries as foreign fighters in this conflict. However, most indicative of the involvement of nationals of these countries in transnational terrorism was the Moroccan involvement in the attacks in Madrid, Spain.

Chapter 6 provides an assessment of the counter-terrorism strategies initiated by the three countries under review. Included are topics such as: political strategies and terrorism, with particular reference to amnesty programmes; socio-economic restructuring; religious control and education. This is followed by an assessment of the impact that counter-terrorism strategies such as mass arrests had on the transnationalisation of domestic terrorism. This chapter concludes with a brief discussion on alliances with non-state actors, for example the Tuareg, in areas where governments and their security forces seldom have complete control over their territories.

In conclusion, Chapter 7 reflects on a number of similar trends that influenced the development of fundamentalist and extremist organisations in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. Finally, a number of alarming trends that deserve the attention of scholars, researchers and practitioners are highlighted.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Scope of the monograph

To the common observer, it would be relatively easy to reach the conclusion that North Africa, in addition to East Africa, is developing as a hotspot for terrorism-related activities in Africa. Developments since 23 January 2007, when the Salafist Group for Combat and Preaching (GSPC), headed by Abdelmalek Droukdel, alias Abu Musab Abdul Wadud, officially announced that it had changed its name to the al-Qa'eda Organisation for the Land of the Islamic Maghreb (AQLIM) support this analysis. Although this development did not come as an absolute surprise considering that the GSPC had been openly warming up towards *al-Qa'eda* for a number of years, analysts expected the organisation to change both its focus and its *modus operandi*.

Notwithstanding this official announcement, one might even argue that the *al-Qa'eda* leadership had influenced the split of the GSPC from the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) in 1998. Although Algeria has seen a gradual decrease in the number of deaths in the past few years, the year 2007 witnessed a change in tactics, with particular reference to a resort to suicide attacks – a tactic not previously familiar in Algeria. Understandably, the Algerian government and its security forces consider the activities of GSPC/AQLIM as limited in comparison to the height of the extremist campaign of the 1990s. Despite this common perception, 75 people died in political violence in September 2007, including 60 killed in suicide blasts; this was more than double the number killed in August. By 1 November 2007, 369 people had been killed in violence involving AQLIM and the security services in the first ten months of 2007 (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007a).

But what will this change in focus mean for the region, particularly for neighbouring countries? Although both Morocco and Tunisia have experienced their fair share of radicalisation and acts of terrorism in the past, it is feared that the GSPC, through AQLIM, will change its vision to become a sub-regional threat to neighbouring countries.

Terrorism is not a new threat to countries in North Africa. Algeria, however, is the country with the most experience of the devastating consequences of

terrorism, as witnessed during the 1990s when a number of groups resorted to terrorism as a tactic against the state and its representatives, as well as against academics and the civilian population.

Morocco and Tunisia managed to contain the immediate threat during the 1990s through different historic and political realities as well as through adopting different counter-terrorism strategies compared with those used in Algeria. However, challenges to security have re-emerged in the past few years as the result of:

- Instability in Algeria that kept the ideals of the *jihadists* alive – signals of its existence broke through in a number of attacks and assistance from countrymen who left for Europe and provided assistance and support to groups in neighbouring Morocco and to a lesser extent in Tunisia
- The war in Iraq provided a new focus – particularly since individuals and smaller groups in all three countries have realised that changing the political landscape in their particular countries is more challenging than they originally expected

Although it is impossible to address historical circumstances and developments in depth, this monograph will attempt to sketch the historical background to the emerging threat of terrorism in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia.

The monograph will also question the hypothesis that current developments might equally be considered as a return to the initial strategy of *al-Qa'eda* in the immediate aftermath of the war in Afghanistan against the then Soviet Union. It is commonly known that the *al-Qa'eda* leadership strived towards the replacement of Muslim governments with 'true Islamic' governments. Influenced by this overall idea, Afghan *Mujahideen* returned to their respective countries of origin, influencing the first phase in the development of terror organisations. In the three countries under review, this objective proved to be more challenging than originally thought in the 1990s.

Despite this common observation, it is essential to analyse the origins, manifestation and threat of terrorism in order to begin to understand the threat and implications of terrorism to the three countries in the Maghreb, namely Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. Libya, Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Nigeria will be only briefly referred to. The following brief historical overview of the development of the threat of terrorism in the Maghreb is therefore intended to do no more than to allow current developments to be assessed.

The primary focus of the monograph will be on developments during 2007, supplemented by a historical context.

It should be noted, however, that factors influencing the threat and manifestation of terrorism also include history and culture, the political system in place, a growing belief that the current secular regimes are unable to deal with poverty and corruption, and the counter-terrorism strategies employed. It would therefore be a mistake to study and analyse terrorism without considering these factors.

In addition to the development and threat of terrorism in the countries under review, nationals of these countries have been implicated in a number of acts and terrorism plots in other countries, particularly in Europe. Additionally, the invasion of Iraq by the US further stimulated the development and spread of recruitment networks in these and other countries. Both scenarios contribute to the question of whether terrorism in the Maghreb is being transnationalised. They also open the debate to include questions relating to radicalisation and its impact on stability in the countries of the region, as well as to other countries indirectly affected.

This monograph will therefore deal with the following themes:

- The history of terrorism in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia – reasons, motivations and primary role-players
- The influence of nationals of the three countries under review on transnational terrorism
- An assessment of the success of counter-terrorism strategies in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia

This introduction briefly focuses on issues that are common to the three countries under discussion. In addition to their understanding of the terms terrorism, Salafism and Wahhabism, all three countries are occupied by Muslim communities. Essentially the last point is of interest since Islamist organisations call for the replacement of these governments with ‘truly Islamic’ governments. Historically, Islamic political thought by both Shi’a and Sunni scholars has contemplated how an Islamic leader should govern. This chapter will therefore also briefly refer to the responsibilities of the head of state and whether rebellion against the head of state can be justified. This discussion indicates that Islamic political thought exists beyond the philosophy and doctrine of *al-Qa’eda*.

Terrorism definitions

Recognising that the international community could not come up with a single definition of terrorism, reference is made to the concept as seen by the African Union (AU) and the Arab League. Although Algeria and Tunisia are both members of the AU, Morocco has suspended its membership. All three countries are, however, members of the Arab League.

According to the Organisation of Africa Unity (OAU) Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, 1999 (the Algiers Convention), a terrorist act under Article 1(3) is:

... constituted by any act or threat which is in violation of the criminal law of the member state, likely to endanger the life, physical integrity, liberties of a person or a group of persons, which causes or may cause damage to private or public property, to natural resources, to the environment or to cultural heritage and with the intention:

- To intimidate, provoke a situation of terror, to force or exercise pressure or to lead any government organisation or institution or persons or groups thereof to make any initiative or to abstain thereof, to adopt, to renounce a particular position or to act according to certain principles
- To interfere with the normal functioning of public services, the supply of essential services to the public and to create a crisis situation among the population
- To start a general insurrection in a member state
- To promote, sponsor, contribute, order, assist, incite, encourage, attempt, threat, conspire, organise or equip any person with the intention to commit any act mentioned above.

The convention does not consider the struggle for self-determination or the struggle against colonialist occupation, aggression and domination by foreign forces as terrorist acts. At the same time, the convention specifies under Article 3 (1 and 2) that no political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or other motives can ever justify terrorist acts envisaged by the convention. Member states must according to the convention review their legislation in order to adapt it to the terms of the convention.

The Arab Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism, 1998 (Cairo) (League of Arab States 1999), defines terrorism in Article 1 as:

Any act or threat of violence, whatever its motives or purposes, that occurs in the advancement of an individual or collective criminal agenda and seeking to sow panic among people, causing fear by harming them, or placing their lives, liberty or security in danger, or seeking to cause damage to the environment or to public or private installations or property or to occupying or seizing them, or seeking to jeopardize a national resource.

Article 2 further stipulates – on lines similar to the OAU convention – that:

All cases of struggle by whatever means, including armed struggle, against foreign occupation and aggression for liberation and self-determination, in accordance with the principles of international law, shall not be regarded as an offence. This provision shall not apply to any act prejudicing the territorial integrity of any Arab state.

A further exclusion under Article 2(b) is that:

None of the terrorist offences indicated in the preceding article shall be regarded as a political offence. In the application of this convention, none of the following offences shall be regarded as a political offence, even if committed for political motives:

- i. Attacks on the kings, Heads of State or rulers of the Contracting States or on their spouses and families;
- ii. Attacks on crown princes, vice-presidents, prime ministers or ministers in any of the Contracting States;
- iii. Attacks on persons enjoying diplomatic immunity, including ambassadors and diplomats serving in or accredited to the Contracting States;
- iv. Premeditated murder or theft accompanied by the use of force directed against individuals, the authorities or means of transport and communications;
- v. Acts of sabotage and destruction of public property and property assigned to a public service, even if owned by another Contracting State;
- vi. The manufacture, illicit trade in or possession of weapons, munitions or explosives, or other items that may be used to commit terrorist offences.

The Algerian approach

Algeria moved away from having dedicated legislation to address terrorism to addressing terrorism as a criminal act within the Penal Code. The reason is that during 1992 Algeria was accused of being too harsh in its fight against terrorism, often in contradiction to human rights. Legislative Decree No 92-03 of 30 September 1992 on combating subversion and terrorism has been amended and supplemented by Legislative Decree No 93-05 of 9 April 1993, while the Penal Code and the Code of Penal Procedure have also been amended to strengthen the country's legislation in countering terrorism.

Algeria's predominant focus has been on domestic terrorism and the threat of terrorism against state security. Article 1 of Decree No 93-03 (reproduced in article 87 bis of Ordinance No 95-11 of 25 February 1995 amending and supplementing Ordinance No 66-156 of 8 June 1966 enacting the Penal Code) defines a subversive or terrorist act as:

... any offence targeting state security, territorial integrity or the stability or normal functioning of institutions through any action seeking to:

- Spread panic among the public and create a climate of insecurity by causing emotional or physical harm to people, jeopardising their lives or freedom or attacking their property;
- Disrupt traffic or freedom of movement on roads and obstruct public areas with gatherings [this was in response to roadblocks as a *modus operandi* used by the GIA and the GSPC];
- Damage republican symbols and profane graves;
- Harm the environment, means of communication or means of transport;
- Impede the activities of public authorities and bodies serving the public, or the free exercise of religion and public freedoms;
- Impede the functioning of public institutions, endanger the lives or damage the property of their staff, or obstruct the implementation of laws and regulations.

Article 2 (reproduced in article 88 bis 3 of the Penal Code) equates the following with terrorist acts:

- The establishment of associations, bodies, groupings or organisations for the purpose of engaging in subversive or terrorist activities

- Membership of or participation in such subversive or terrorist associations in any form
- Advocating terrorism and encouraging or funding terrorist activities
- Reproducing or disseminating documents, recordings or printed matter advocating terrorism. [This is a reference to Article 12(n) of the AU Plan of Action that calls on member states to 'take adequate measures to prevent and outlaw the printing, publication and dissemination, by one or several persons residing on the territory of any member state, of news items and press releases initiated by apologists of terrorist acts which are prejudicial to the interest and security of any other member state']

Ordinance No 95-11, referred to above, amended the Penal Code to reflect new realities and the development of terrorist activities at transnational levels, with a view to incorporating the following into the definition of a terrorist:

- Any Algerian who participates in or enrolls abroad in a terrorist or subversive association, grouping or organisation, whatever its form or name, even if its activities are not directed against Algeria
- Any person who sells, purchases, distributes, imports or manufactures knives for illegal purposes
- Any person who possesses, obtains, carries, markets, imports, exports, manufactures, repairs or utilises prohibited weapons, ammunition or explosives without authorisation from the competent authority

Pursuant to Ordinance No 95-11, Algeria's lawmakers amended and supplemented the Penal Code through provisions concerning all forms of justification, encouragement and financing of terrorist acts. Article 87 bis 4 of the code criminalises the justification of terrorism: 'Anyone who justifies, encourages or finances the acts covered by this section by any means shall be subject to penalties of five to ten years' imprisonment and a fine of DA 500 000' (UN Security Council 2007:4).

Article 87 bis 5 deals with the reproduction or dissemination of printed documents or recordings that incite terrorist acts: 'Anyone who knowingly reproduces or disseminates printed documents or recordings that seek to justify the acts covered by this section shall be subject to five to ten years' imprisonment and a fine of DA 100 000 to DA 500 000' (UN Security Council 2007:4).

Article 87 bis 10 criminalises the use of mosques beyond their intended purpose: 'Anyone who, through preaching or by any other action, conducts an activity contrary to the noble mission of the mosque or likely to undermine social cohesion or to seek to justify and advocate the acts envisaged in this section' establishes a penalty of 3 to 5 years' imprisonment and a fine of DA 50,000 to 200,000. (UN Security Council 2007:4).

In dealing with the involvement of Algerians in transnational terrorism, the recruitment abroad of any Algerian to a terrorist organisation is punishable by law in accordance with Article 87 bis 6: 'Any Algerian who is active or enrolled in a terrorist or subversive association, group or organisation abroad, whatever its structure or name, even if its activities are not directed against Algeria, shall be subject to ten to 20 years' imprisonment and a fine of DA 500 000 to DA 1 000 000.'

Algeria is also opposed to the granting of political asylum to terrorists, who often invoke political considerations in applying for documents allowing them to reside in host countries, particularly referring to the use of European countries as a base of operations. The Penal Code's scope of application has therefore been expanded to include the activities of Algerians residing abroad, even in the case of offences that are not directed against Algeria (UN Security Council 2007:4).

The Moroccan approach

Morocco defines an act of terrorism as 'any crime committed intentionally in relation to an individual or collective activity with the goal of causing serious disruption of public order by intimidation, terror or violence' (Agence France-Presse [AFP] 2003). According to a report submitted by Morocco to the Counter Terrorism Committee (2003:7): 'Moroccan legislation does not provide for any proceedings against a foreigner located in Morocco if he has committed a terrorist act abroad against a state other than Morocco or against the government of that state.' However, the foreigner may be extradited to the particular country under a bilateral agreement.

Articles 748–756 of the Code of Penal Procedure deal with jurisdiction concerning certain offences committed outside the Kingdom of Morocco:

Moroccan courts are competent to try any Moroccan and any person who has acquired Moroccan nationality for criminal acts committed outside Moroccan territory that are defined as crimes or offences, if

the alleged guilty party returns to Morocco and is unable to prove that he was the subject of an irrevocable decision (Article 751). Prosecution in Morocco is possible even if the alleged guilty party obtained Moroccan nationality after carrying out a criminal act (UN Security Council 2002:6).

Terrorist acts and advocacy of terrorism are criminalised under Article 218 bis of Act 03-03 of 28 May 2003, which established that:

... advocacy of acts constituting terrorist offences by speeches, shouts or threats uttered in public places or meetings, or by written or printed matter sold, distributed or offered for sale or exhibited in public places or meetings, or by public messages using various audiovisual and electronic media, shall be punishable by two to six years' imprisonment and a fine of 10,000 to 200,000 dirhams (UN Security Council 2006a:5).

Addressing the threat that publications can be used to incite hatred and terrorism, Article 3 of Dahir No 1-58-378 of 15 November 1958 promulgated the Press and Publishing Code (supplemented by Act 77-00 enacted by Dahir No 1-02-207 of 3 October 2002), which stipulates that:

... anyone using one of the means mentioned in Article 38 to incite racial discrimination, hatred or violence against one or more persons on the grounds of race, origin, colour, ethnic or religious affiliation, or supporting war crimes and crimes against humanity, shall be punished by imprisonment for a term of one month to one year and a fine of 3,000 to 30,000 dirhams, or by only one of these two penalties (UN Security Council 2006a:5).

The Tunisian approach

On 10 December 2003 Tunisia passed Act No 75 of 2003 concerning support for international efforts to combat terrorism and prevent money laundering. Article 1 provides that the law shall guarantee the right of society to live in security and peace, protected from anything that may undermine its stability, and to reject all forms of deviance, violence, fanaticism, racial segregation and terrorism that threaten the peace and stability of societies. This Act also contributes to supporting the international effort to combat all forms of terrorism, tackling the sources of financing of terrorism and suppressing money laundering within the framework of the international, regional and

bilateral conventions ratified by Tunisia and in compliance with constitutional guarantees. Article 5 of the Constitution of Tunisia guarantees fundamental freedoms and human rights in the universal, global, complementary and interdependent sense (UN Security Council 2006:4; 7).

Article 11 of Act No 75 of 2003 provides as follows:

Anyone who incites the commission of a terrorist offence or conspires to commit such an offence, or intends to commit such an offence, where the intention is accompanied by any act preparatory to the commission of such an offence, shall be guilty of a terrorist offence (UN Security Council 2006:7).

Several sections of Tunisia's Criminal Code are also relevant. These include the following:

- *Section 52.* 'Any crime relating to an individual or collective project aimed at damage to persons or property for the purpose of intimidation or to cause alarm shall be categorised as terrorist. Acts of incitement to hatred or racist or religious fanaticism shall also be dealt with as terrorist offences, whatever the means used.'
- *Section 72.* 'Any person who perpetrates an attack with the intention of changing the form of government or provoking armed attacks among the population or disorder, slaughter or looting in Tunisian territory shall be liable to execution.'
- *Section 74.* 'Any person who assembles and arms groups, or leads armed groups, for the purpose of plundering the assets of the state or individuals or seizing or destroying movable or immovable property shall be liable to execution. This same penalty shall apply to any person who by force or otherwise prevents the police from putting down such attacks.'
- *Section 131.* 'The formation of any group for any period, with any number of members and on the basis of any agreement reached, for the purpose of preparing or committing an attack against persons or property shall be deemed to constitute a crime against public security.'
- *Section 133.* 'Any person who deliberately prepares a meeting place for members of a criminal group, assists them with money or in benefiting from the proceeds of their criminal actions, or provides them with lodging or a hiding place shall be liable.'

Dealing with incitement of terrorism, Article 6 of Act No 2003-75 provides that ‘acts of incitement, by whatever means, to hatred or racial or religious fanaticism are subject to the same regime as offences that are classified as terrorist acts’ (UN Security Council 2006:3).

Article 42 of Organic Act No 93-85 of 2 August 1993, amending the Press Code, provides that ‘anyone who, through the press or by any other intentional means of dissemination, directly incites the perpetrator or perpetrators to commit a serious or minor offence, where such incitement results in the commission of such an offence, shall be considered an accomplice to the said offence’ (UN Security Council 2006:3).

Article 44 of the Press Code establishes a penalty of imprisonment for a term of two months to three years and a fine of 1 000 to 2 000 dinars ‘for anyone who, by the means referred to in Article 42, directly incites hatred among races, religions or peoples, the dissemination of opinions based on racial segregation or religious extremism, the commission of the offences set out in Article 48 of this Code, or the infringement of laws’ (UN Security Council 2006:3).

Article 5 of the Act Concerning Mosques of 3 May 1988 prohibits any activity in mosques ‘in the form of speeches, meetings or writing, by persons other than those belonging to the body responsible for running the mosque’ (UN Security Council 2006:7).

Reflecting domestic realities, Tunisia places emphasis on the role and boundaries of political parties. As will be discussed in the chapter dealing with Tunisia, political parties ‘may not base their principles, purposes, activities or programmes fundamentally on any religion, language, race, sex or region’.

Article 2 of Organic Act No 88-32 of 3 May 1988, concerning the organisation of political parties, provides that political parties shall act within the bounds of the constitution and the law. ‘They shall also prohibit all forms of violence, as well as fanaticism, racism and all other forms of discrimination. Political parties may not base their principles, activities or programmes fundamentally on any religion, language, race, sex or region’ (UN Security Council 2006: 4).

Salafism

The word *salafi* refers to the companions of the Prophet Mohammed or the *shahaba* and the first three generations (610–661). In reaction to the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the advances of the West, Muslim scholars such as

Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–1897) and Muhammad Abdu were concerned that the Muslim world was lagging behind – particularly since the different Muslim schools of thought ‘closed the gates of *ijtihad*’ (interpretation). Instead, Muslims blindly followed the interpretations of the four schools of Sunni Islamic jurisprudence (Hanafi, Hanbali, Maliki and Shafi). Salafism subsequently called for a return to the original sources of Islam, the *Qur’an* and the practices of the Prophet Mohammed in interpreting modern realities (Hafez 2007:65).

Mandaville (2007:248–249) made a distinction between three forms of Salafism:

- Salafi quietists ‘emphasise the importance of individual adherence to proper thought, practice and *Shari’a*, but reject the idea of actively pursuing an Islamic political order as a distinct religious duty unto itself; to do so would lead one to emphasise the pursuit of worldly power at the expense of piety and religious obligation. The correct Islamic society will emerge when Muslims have collectively adopted this correct method’
- Salafi Islamists ‘believe in the active pursuit of an Islamic political order (...) violence may be necessary under specific conditions’. Influenced by the thoughts of Sayyid Qutb, scholars moved to Saudi Arabia and merged with Wahhabi thinking leading to this interpretation
- Salafi *jihadists* ‘combine the political imperatives of the Salafi Islamists with a conviction that contemporary circumstances make violent struggle an individual duty incumbent upon all Muslims’. This school of thought disregards the other interpretations because quietists as well as Islamists ‘are willing to work within the political system’. *Jihadists*, for their part, argue that these political systems are under the control of infidels, making it illegitimate to work within the process. In other words, *jihad* is considered to be an obligation against infidel regimes that do not rule according to God’s laws, including Muslim governments which violate God’s sovereignty (because they do not rule in accordance with the *Qur’an*) classified as *takfir*. This school also justifies *jihad* against Shi’a Muslims as well as people working for ‘apostate’ regimes. ‘(...) *jihad* is continuous until all of humanity submits to Islam or the authority of Muslim rule. *Jihad* is therefore an aggressive doctrine, not a defensive concept. It persists until Judgement Day’ (Hafez 2007:65)

Mandaville (2007:246–249) and Hafez (2007:66–70) identify the following key features of the Salafi approach:

- Emphasis on the concept of *tawhid* (unity of God). In addition to the daily proclamation that there is no God but Allah and that Mohammed is his messenger, Salafism argues that this proclamation should also be a way of life
- The foundation of Salafism is the *Qur'an*, the *Sunna* and the *Hadiths* of those authors whose authenticity is not questioned
- Salafism place a renewed emphasis on God's sovereignty (*hakimiyyat allah*) in that God is the only law-giver who can decide between right and wrong as revealed in the *Qur'an*. 'Conversely, altering, ignoring or nullifying God's revelation is violating God's sovereignty and subverting his will. Salafists also believe that the *Qur'an* is the comprehensive guidance of God on matters of worship (*ibadat*) and social relations (*muamalat*, economics, warfare, marriage, taxes), as well as in the universalism of the *Qur'an* and its applicability in all places on earth and at all times' (Hafez 2007:67)
- Ideologies such as Marxism, liberalism and humanism contradict the sovereignty of God. Salafism denies the need for new sources of interpretation
- Salafism rejects all forms of innovation (*bid'a*). In other words, the *Qur'an* as the last revelation of God should be read and followed literally. Sufi rituals such as the visiting of graves and other practices are considered as contradicting the regulations and stipulations on the practice of religion. Essentially, any practice not referred to in the *Qur'an* should not be part of Islam
- Salafism rejects the notion that there are different schools of jurisprudence or different interpretations of religion
- Salafism rejects the blind following of jurisprudential practice. Instead, it calls for a constant *ijtihad* – not permitting individual interpretations, but rather going back to the original sources
- Categorising fellow Muslims as *takfir* or non-Muslim is important in justifying the use of violence against fellow Muslims, which is not permitted in Islam. Salafists believe that the actions of Muslims can place them beyond the realm of Islam. Different interpretations exist on when a Muslim can be regarded as *takfir* (derived from *kafir* = infidel or unbeliever). They however distinguish themselves from Khawarij and Murjiah. Khawarij claimed that

‘anyone who violates God’s word and rules by something other than God’s command is no longer a Muslim; he is an apostate’. Murjiah argued that ‘as long as a person publicly declares he or she is a Muslim, no one can declare that person to be otherwise; it is up to God to judge people’s faith’ (Hafez 2007:69). Salafis differ from Murjiah in that a mere declaration is insufficient, particularly when a person’s actions contradict and even reject the *Qur’an*. Salafi *jihadis* however argue that a Muslim can be classified as *takfir* after he has been warned that his actions and verbal statements fall beyond the framework of Islam

In addition to providing details of Salafi scholars, the following discussion will briefly reflect on the primary contributions of a few key thinkers who have influenced the philosophy of organisations in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia (as well as many other groups throughout the world):

- Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani (1839–1897) believed that ‘if a ruler is a man of knowledge, statesmanship, courage and high purpose, he rules his nation with justice and creates better living conditions for the masses’. However, if the ruler is unjust and tyrannical, if disorder, misery and frustration prevail, what is to be done? Afghani believed that if ‘people in such a country have still some life in them, their leaders and representatives of public opinion will overthrow the ruler’ (Siddiqi 1993:114). In other words, Afghani believed in the right of revolt
- Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905) proclaimed that the unity of God was ‘the cornerstone of Islamic belief and the source of the Muslim community’s strength and vitality’ (Esposito 1988:132). He also emphasised that Muslims should have confidence in taking religion into their own hands, following the lead of the early companions of the Prophet Mohammed, particularly after his death (Mandaville 2007:248). Abduh held that the transformation of the Muslim community depended on the reinterpretation of Islam and its implementation through education and social reforms (Esposito 1988:133). However, he also believed that the community had the right to depose the ruler if he was not just and the general welfare demanded it. In summary, Abduh believed that the crisis of modern Islam was precipitated by the failure of Muslims to uphold the distinction between the immutable and the mutable, the necessary and the contingent. It was particularly Rashid Rida (see the next entry) who became the mouthpiece for Abduh’s viewpoints (Siddiqi 1993:115)
- Rashid Rida (1865–1935), a follower of Ibn Taymiyya, believed that a modern Islamic legal system was necessary and that the implementation

of Islamic law required an Islamic government, since law was the product of consultation between the ruler (caliph) and the guardian-interpreters of law (the *ulama*). The Muslim political system had decayed as a result of an absence of *shura* (consultation) (Siddiqi 1993:118). The reservation, however, existed that the *ulama* was backward and ill equipped to understand the modern world. To reinforce the role of Islam, the caliphate had to introduce pan-Islamic unity. Rida presented a more conservative approach towards the West and even considered Britain as a political and religious threat to Islam. As an admirer of the Wahhabi movement in Arabia, Rida was more inclined to emphasise the self-sufficiency and comprehensiveness of Islam, encouraging the return to the basic principles as presented in the *Qur'an*, *Sunna* and *Hadith* of the Prophet. In rejecting Western secular liberalism and in emphasising the self-sufficiency of Islam, Rida influenced the thinking of Hasan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (Esposito 1988:134-135). Essentially, Rida established the idea of a modern Islamic state and the 'compatibility' of the *Shari'a* with modern political realities (Mandaville 2007:248)

- Sayyid Qutb equated Salafism with violent struggle. He confirmed and established certain core precepts concerning governance – most significantly stating that 'the oneness and sovereignty of God preclude human rule, which should be violently overturned if necessary, and that the only legitimate form of government over Muslims is an Islamic state headed by a caliph' (Atwan 2006:66). Qutb introduced an intellectual paradigm in explaining reality. The terminology he introduced included:
 - *Jahiliyya*, which referred to a period of ignorance delivered from the period prior to the revelation of Islam in Arabia. Qutb referred to the period of repression under Nasser as *jahiliyya*, which implied that the Egyptian government was classified as *takfir* (Kepel 2003:31)
 - *Hakimiyya*, which was the legislative exclusiveness of God's law. Qutb said that the nation was not entitled to legislate at will, and that Muslim scholars had confused the act of exercising power with that of its source. In other words, 'people do not possess, nor do they delegate, the right of sovereignty. Rather they implement what God has legislated in accordance with His exclusive authority. In this sense, Islam must first be restituted, then discussions of technical procedure, such as elections, can proceed. Political power has to be gained before all other considerations' (Choueiri 1996:20)
 - *Al-Gama'a al-mu'mina*, which was the community of believers
 - *Al-Infisal al-shu'uri*, which was translated as ideological separation
 Categorising current Muslim communities as *jahili* for not implementing the *Shari'a*, Qutb called for a community of believers who should separate

themselves ideologically, but not physically, from the rest of the community working towards implementing Islamic values. Qutb also considered democracy as a direct violation of God's sovereignty, particularly since people are responsible for their own legislation (Choueiri 1996:20)

- Mawlana Mawdudi (1903–1979) referred to 'Islamisation from above', through a state in which sovereignty would be exercised in the name of Allah and the *Shari'a* would be implemented. He declared that politics was 'an integral, inseparable part of the Islamic faith, and that the Islamic state that Muslim political action seeks to build is a panacea for all their [Muslims'] problems'. For him the five traditional Pillars of Islam (profession of faith, prayer, Ramadan, pilgrimage and almsgiving) were merely 'phases of training and preparation for *jihad*, the struggle against those of Allah's creatures who have usurped His sovereignty' (Kepel 2003:34)

Wahhabism

Wahhabism, which is often considered as a variant of Salafism, is named after Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1792), who was trained in law, theology and Sufism at Mecca and Medina, where he was drawn to the Hanbali school and the writings of Ibn Taymiyya (d 1328). Esposito (1988:120) summarises his ideas as follows:

The Wahhabi diagnosis was similar to that of other revivalists. The political weakness of the community and its moral decline were due to a departure from the straight path of Islam. Its cure was equally obvious; its task was clear. Muslims must return to true Islamic practice. This could be achieved only by repetition of Islam's first great reformation, the social and moral revolution led by Muhammad, a return to community life based strictly on the *Qur'an* and the example of Muhammad and the Medinan community (...) the purpose of *ijtihad* was a return to a purified Islam by weeding out those un-Islamic beliefs and practices that had infiltrated the law and life of Muslims.

After establishing an alliance with the Saud, a powerful tribal family, Wahhab and the Saud family initiated a campaign to consolidate other tribes under this interpretation. This campaign included the use of violence against fellow Muslims (and influencing their interpretation of *takfir*):

In order to legitimise attacks against other clans which were also Muslim, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab had to be able to make a case that the non-Islamic

practices followed by these groups had effectively placed them outside the remit of religion; in other words, that by incorrect religious practice they had made themselves into infidels (in which case the strictures against Muslims using violence on fellow Muslims no longer applied). [As a result] Wahhabi scholars lay great emphasis on differentiating true believers from infidels in the name of justifying political expansion and the use of violence against other Muslims. This has led to an emphasis among Wahhabis on the practice of *takfir* (Mandaville 2007:153; 247).

Subsequently, Wahhabism was considered by other Muslims as intolerant in that its ideological principles, with particular reference to *takfir*, influenced modern interpretations in justifying violence and *jihad* against fellow Muslims and governments, which, according to their interpretation, do not govern in accordance with the *Qur'an* and *Sunna*. Merging Wahhabism and the Salafi *jihadi* movements, a line can be drawn particularly to the GIA and AQLIM, which justify the indiscriminate use of violence against fellow Muslims and current governments.

Conclusion

Although we cannot here enter into a full discussion of the relationship between a government or state on one hand and religion on the other, the following summary is important.

Islamic extremists believe that the establishment of an Islamic system of government is not merely an option, but a requirement, based on God's command. In practical terms, Muslims are under an obligation to implement and follow God's law. Since the legitimacy of Muslim governments is based on the *Shari'a*, those who do not implement and follow it to the letter are regarded as illegitimate. Those governments and individuals who fail to follow Islamic law are not regarded as being Muslim, and this provides sufficient grounds for a legitimate *jihad*. Opposition to illegitimate governments also extends to the official religious establishments that are used to legitimise government policies and actions. To rectify the current state of affairs, reformists began to call on Muslims to reject paid imams (those who lead prayers) and to abolish *muftis* and ministers of Islamic affairs or *Awqaf*. Opposing nationalism would include abolishing state-owned mosques and the removal of nationalist symbols from mosques.

Conversely, governments (often regarded as illegitimate) control the religious establishment primarily for the following political reasons:

- To provide credibility or legitimacy to the government
- To excuse the behaviour of the government or even to justify it
- As a strategy to counter religious opposition from the local community
- If the religious establishment is under the control of the government, it will not criticise it, at least in practice. The assumption is that the official religious authority would not issue statements contradicting the government for fear of being replaced, thereby limiting the possibility of objectivity and representation

This raises the question of what is expected of a legitimate Islamic government. Based on the *Qur'an* and the example set by the Prophet Muhammad and the four Rightly Guided Caliphs, a ruler's obligations are both practical and religious. Traditionally, the head of state has religious as well as political responsibilities, which should be placed in context by an agreement between himself and his subjects (Dadoo 2001:25-26).

Religious responsibilities include:

- The protection of Islam as a religion
- The responsibility to wage war against those who openly wage war against Islam, depending on available resources
- The appointment of both the callers to prayer as well as the imams. The head of state is also responsible for the general maintenance of mosques and, when he is available, for leading prayers. His responsibilities also include the appointment of people to oversee the pilgrimage to Mecca.

These responsibilities received renewed attention with the decision to use mosques to ensure political obedience while heads of state did not adhere to their other responsibilities.

Political responsibilities include:

- Safeguarding peace and general order in defence of the country (a function of the military) and the protection and safeguarding of life and property (a function of the police)
- Establishing justice through the formation of a penal code to ensure that people's rights are protected and Islamic symbols are not violated

- The appointment of honest civil servants
- Protecting freedom. Freedom and the protection of human dignity under all conditions are considered an inalienable right. The ruler is under an obligation to protect and guarantee freedom in all fields, including religion, thought, speech and political life. Freedom of thought allows for freedom of opinion, criticism and speech. Freedom of expression applies to all activities

Grounds for political dissent against a Muslim government question the legitimacy of both the declaration that *jihad* against a fellow Muslim that is traditionally regarded as unacceptable, and also of the *Qur'anic* call on Muslims to respect and adhere to those placed in positions of authority. According to most extremists, legitimacy of Muslim governments is based on the *Shari'a*, thus those governments that do not follow it are illegitimate. Those who fail to follow the *Shari'a* – both governments and individuals – are guilty of unbelief. They are no longer Muslims, but are atheists whose unbelief demands *jihad*.

This is the basis on which extremists, including, for example, the GIA in Algeria, legitimise the call of a *jihad* against fellow Muslims. Any country that is not governed according to Islamic principles although the majority of its population are Muslim, serves as a fertile ground for extremist organisations. For example, in the pamphlet published by the *jihad* organisation responsible for the assassination of President Sadat of Egypt, reference was made to *jihad* as 'the absent duty'. The author of the pamphlet, Abd al-Salim Faraj, regarded Sadat as an unbeliever and based his argument on the *fatwa* of Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328), who argued that the profession of faith is not sufficient when Muslims apply their own law instead of the *Shari'a*. Despite demands from Islamic groups to rule in accordance with the *Shari'a*, the Egyptian government based its rule on Western principles. It could thus not be regarded as Islamic and, according to Faraj, it was the 'individual duty of all Muslims to rise in armed rebellion against this heathen regime in order to replace it with an Islamic one' (Peters 1996:8).

In assuming that sovereignty belongs only to God, one needs to establish Islam's basis for leadership. In Islam those who are in government are regarded as trustees, and do not have a different status before God from the rest of the population. The head of state is not above the law and should be open to scrutiny. One may therefore presume that despotism should be ruled out as an Islamic form of government. As with Western political thought, Islamic philosophers have questioned whether an unjust leader should be

obeyed and what basis exists for revolt against such a leader. As well as being an important aspect of the ideal Islamic political system, this also introduces more recent claims by Islamic extremists justifying revolt against both Islamic governments and non-Islamic or secular governments.

During emergencies, the head of state is allowed to resort to measures that, while not contradicting the *Qur'an*, the *Sunna* or the consensus of the jurists, have the objective of protecting religion, life, intellect, progeny and wealth. But obedience to such measures is not compulsory if the head of state acts against the fundamental teachings of Islam. Islamic jurists provide the following guidelines for obedience to a ruler or for conditions under which revolt is justified (Dadoo 2001:26):

- A head of state who applies the Islamic codes deserves obedience from all. If the majority of the Muslim community is loyal to the ruler, all have to obey him even if they disapprove of his administrative policies. 'A state can be legitimate only when its citizens acknowledge its authority.' A Muslim ruler has a responsibility towards God as well as towards the citizens who gave him the authority to rule. This implies that if he is just and adheres to God's law, he must be obeyed, but otherwise not. Compliance with this responsibility not only has consequences in this realm but also in the hereafter on the Day of Judgment. The Prophet Muhammad warned: 'Any ruler over Muslims who dies while he has been dishonest to them will find that Allah shall make Paradise unlawful for him.' If the community is unable to remove an unfit ruler, Muslims are under no obligation to comply with his orders (Dadoo 2001:36). Despotic rule discourages public participation in political affairs. In Muslim countries governments are predominantly secular and Westernised while their citizens are not. Rulers are unable to legitimise their rule, making them vulnerable. This vulnerability leads to a situation where, in order to stay in power, governments may resort to indoctrination and violence to protect their rule, and this further separates them from their subjects. In most Muslim countries democratic institutions are presented as representing the people. However, the reality is that parliamentary systems display elements of authoritarianism and an inability to tolerate diversity and political dissent. This often manifests itself in the banning or restricting of political parties. Mosques, 'as private property', often become an avenue for representing the local community in an attempt to correct this imbalance. As a result of sermons in mosques that are regarded as anti-state or critical of the state, governments may order the direct intervention of the military or the police or indirectly attempt to keep the religious establishment in line by making it dependent on the state. This strategy further polarises local communities

- When governments issue laws that are clearly contradictory to Islamic principles, citizens must not obey them
- When governments adopt a visibly deliberate or negative stance towards *Qur'anic* laws, they are considered to be in open disbelief, which justifies their removal
- When there is an absence of open disbelief, the removal of government authority should not be achieved through armed rebellion by a minority sector.

During periods of revivalism, *jihad* has been used against governments in power. The reason for *jihad* in these instances was to impose a purer form of Islam. To justify their claims and actions, both the governments and their would-be usurpers claimed a monopoly on religion

In the three countries under review, gradual radicalisation will be discussed, influenced by a number of factors and dealt with through diverse counter-strategies.

CHAPTER 2

TERRORISM IN ALGERIA

A number of historical developments have influenced the emergence of Algeria as one of the hotspots for terrorism-related activities in Africa. These developments have influenced not only Algeria and its immediate region but also terror networks elsewhere, including Europe. As well as posing a domestic threat, Algerian Islamists have also contributed to transnational terrorism. In addition to these two dimensions, the development of extreme political thought was influenced by internal as well as external developments over a relatively long period. In order to understand and analyse current developments, one needs to consider the historical background of the primary role-players and the underlying factors contributing to these developments.

This chapter also corrects the common misconception that the trouble in Algeria started with the return of Algerian Afghan *Mujahideen* and the cancellation of the elections in 1992. Although the *Mujahideen* played an important role in the establishment of radical groups such as the GIA and later the GSPC, existing domestic circumstances provided favourable circumstances for Salafi principles to flourish in the political cells of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS).

As indicated in Chapter 1, the influence of *al-Qa'eda* is also not a new phenomenon. In addition to the fact that Salafi theory and ideals cut across organisations in providing a common language between organisations throughout the world, the open alignment of the GSPC with *al-Qa'eda* should rather be seen as a return to an earlier relationship with extremists in Algeria that was tarnished by the GIA during its indiscriminate killing of civilians. It should, indeed, be observed that nothing develops overnight and that an apparently new situation should be seen and studied in context. This includes the open alignment of the GSPC with *al-Qa'eda* and subsequent changes in its *modus operandi* and target selection. Through mobile training camps, the impact of this organisation is far-reaching in Africa as well as in Europe and the Middle East, including Iraq.

The history of terrorism in Algeria

Algeria's independence from France in 1962 brought the National Liberation Front (FLN) to power after a violent liberation war that most likely also

psychologically influenced developments in the 1990s. The ‘Kabyle smile’ – or the slitting of a victim’s throat – which was a tactic used during the liberation struggle, especially against French collaborators, was again used by the GIA. In another example, the liberation war was fought by ‘Patriots’ who, when threatened, installed a culture of public participation. This led to the formation of *groupes d’autodéfense* (self-defence groups) or *Patriotes* (Patriots) to counter the terrorists.

Political, socio-economic and cultural developments since independence further encouraged the formation of fundamentalist and later extremist parties and movements. These developments can be summarised as follows:

- *Urbanisation and deteriorating socio-economic conditions.* In the late 1970s unemployment began to grow dramatically. In 1985, 72 per cent of the unemployed were under the age of 25 – an age group estimated to make up 65 per cent of the population (Stora 2004:193-194)
- *The social impact of Colonel Boumediene’s Arabisation process introduced in the early 1970s.* In the process of asserting Algeria’s leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Arab world, Algeria imported Muslim teachers from Syria and Egypt to ‘Arabise’ the French-speaking country. This process initially started as an initiative to rid Algeria of its French-colonial influence. Its consequences will be referred to later
- *Unification of the entire population without social, political or cultural distinctions.* As part of this initiative, history was rewritten by a commission in order to secure the Algerian recollection of its liberation struggle. Although this process was understandable as a cultivation of an Algerian identity, Stora (2004:189) explained that history was selectively recollected. ‘The aim of the commission was not to research and understand a complex past, but to obey the orders of the regime and the demands of the present. It was used in that way in the FLN’s internal political debates.’ The new history formed part of a search for identity among the youth of both Arabic and Berber heritage. This was a void the Islamists were willing to fill
- *Islamic identity versus socialism.* Islamists in particular rejected the exclusion of a reference to Islam as the state religion in the draft constitution of 1976. For them, this mistake served as an example of the ‘regime’s indifference to Islam and of the influence of Marxist and leftist elements’ (Shahin 1997:122). *Al-Muwahhidun* (The Monotheists) demanded the ‘adoption of Islam as a way of life and as the basis of the

legislative, economic and political systems in society'. Hamas – referred to later in this discussion – summarised Algerian society as:

(...) the adoption of imported ideologies that contradict the religion and values of the Algerian nation; the authoritarian style of government and absence of consultation, dialogue and transparency (...) the absence of a good example and the adoption of regionalism and personal loyalty, instead of merit, integrity and ability in assigning responsibility; the lack of confidence between the people and the government as a result of totalitarianism, tyranny, corruption and the exploitation of influence to achieve personal, regional and party gains (...) (Shahin 1997:122)

- *Women's rights.* These were protected under the constitution in contradiction to the practice of the day in which women were not permitted to marry non-Muslims and in which women were required to have matrimonial guardians. In reaction, women's associations, often led by female veterans of the liberation war, called for the practical implementation of the constitution. In reaction to these claims, Islamists called for the implementation of the *Shari'a* (Stora 2004:192). Islamists subsequently focused their attention on women who acted in contradiction to a rigid interpretation of the *Shari'a*
- *The political front.* Algeria adopted a single-party system and prevented the younger generation from having access to or influence political developments. Instead of ruling through the FLN, President Houaru Boumedienne focused his attention on the military elite and enforced the ban on political parties and organisations initiated after independence (Shahin 1997:114-115). Conditions deteriorated further under President Chadli Benjedid that led to the formation of Islamic fundamentalist and extremist groups. Due to a lack in leadership and the challenges associated with the fact that significant official positions were reserved for FNL party members, decreasing oil prices in the 1980s further brought severe socio-economic challenges that were compounded by rapid population growth and corruption. Attacking symbols of the government, including government offices and the headquarters of the FLN, the bread riots of 4–10 October 1988 were a watershed in Algerian political development. As a result of growing demands, protesters called for an end to the one-party political system as well as wider democratic freedoms. Subsequently, on 10 October 1988 President Bendjedid announced a referendum to revise the 1976 constitution, and he followed this on 23 October with the introduction of political reforms. These

reforms were based on three principles: separation between the state and the FLN; free participation in municipal and legislative elections; and autonomy for mass movements. Recognising the harm done in the process of rewriting history, a newspaper on 24 November 1988 wrote, *inter alia*: ‘(...) we must recover our memory, all our memory, without “filters”’ (Stora 2004:197)

- *The army*. This played a leading role in government since independence. It was moved ‘to the centre of authority’ and reinstated ‘as the guarantor of the continuity of the regime and the protector of stability and public order’ (Shahin 1997:128). This development eventually opened the door for the military establishment to intervene after the first round of elections. Prior to the elections, faced with the bread riots, a state of emergency had been declared that included harsh crackdowns. In fear of further political uprisings, the military turned Algeria into a police state, threatening freedom of speech by limiting the development of a political culture and an environment that allowed questioning and dissent. After the bread riots of October 1988, President Bendjedid introduced a new multiparty constitution ‘to open up the political system and prevent further unrest’ (Marlowe 2003). However, an outcome other than the one originally hoped for followed the sudden opening up of the repressive political landscape. What had happened was a form of crisis management rather than a willingness to deal with consequences that included the possibility of being ousted from political power

Ideologically, a number of factors influenced the emergence of extremism in Algeria:

- *Growing calls for a return to Islam and a rejection of the state’s monopoly on religion*. It is interesting to note that the Association of Scholars had been the first organisation to be dissolved after independence in 1962. Notwithstanding the fact that it was similar to the Muslim Brotherhood (an ally during the Egyptian revolution), the association played an important role in the decolonisation process. Its legitimacy and the respect in which it was held provided the reason for it to be dissolved. Its dissolution was an important step in the creation of a one-party state. As the association had demanded that Islam should be the ideological and political source of reference, the FLN needed to have a monopoly over the interpretation of Islam if it were to be successful in creating a one-party state (Shahin 1997:115). In 1963 *Jam’iyyat al-Qiyam* (the Association of Values) was formed by Abdel Latif Sultani, Ahmed Sahnoun, Omar al-Arabaoui and Mesbah al-Huwaisig, and was headed by Hachemi

Tidjani. This association presented itself as 'the instrument for restoring the authentic values of Islam' or as an academic organisation. Although initially allowed by government it was influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Islamic intellectuals such as Malik Bin Nabi. As a Salafiyya movement that called for the return to Islamic values, it was also influenced by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh (Shahin 1997:116). It called for 'action within the framework of the party of God as opposed to the party of Satan and recommended an Islamic policy drawn from the divine revolution' (Stora 2004:172). Fearing that the association might undermine the government's legitimacy, the government began to restrict its activities in 1966. The Association of Values was dismantled in March 1966 after its association with the Muslim Brotherhood was confirmed, particularly following protests after the execution of Sayyid Qutb (Shahin 1997:116). Despite being banned, its ideas influenced later organisations. Sheikh Sulanti in 1974 published *Le mazdaqisme est à l'origine du socialisme* (Mazdakism is the Origin of Socialism), which was considered to be the first manifesto of the Islamist movement, criticising 'the country's running elite and secular intellectuals for their deviation from true Islamic principles and their adoption of foreign and non-Islamic ideologies'. Sultani viewed this as 'a clear betrayal of Algeria's martyrs and the sacrifice the country had offered in order to preserve the Arab and Islamic identity of its population'. He also criticised the regime for 'its intolerance of dissent' and defended the country's scholars against 'attempts to marginalise them and the harsh criticisms of conservatism and stagnation' (Shahin 1997:119). The government, however, controlled the religious establishment, which also included the training of new imams, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs

- *The influence of the Muslim Brotherhood.* As a number of scholars studied in Egypt and as Egyptian scholars were 'imported' to Algeria as part of the government's Arabisation process, the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood became imbedded. *El Irshad Oua El Islah*, formed by Sheikh Bouslimani and Sheikh Mahfoud Nahnah, was the first organisation specifically formed to target popular support. Another earlier organisation that was particularly influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood was *al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya bi al-Jaza'ir* (the Jaz'ara Trend) that later became known as *Harakat al-Mujtam'a al-Islami* (Hamas) and the al-Nahda party. Formed predominantly by university professors, the Jaz'ara Trend focused on Islam as an alternative to Marxism. Sheikh Mahfoud Nahnah, who focused on education and the socialisation of individuals, formed Hamas, while Sheikh Abdullah Jaballah founded *al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya* (the Islamic Group) in

1974. Nahnah essentially believed in using the humanitarian assistance approach, (non-violent and gradual approach) to establish an Islamic Republic, while Jaballah opted for an immediate and violent approach in achieving this objective. Jaballah confirmed the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood when he stated that:

our movements adopt the method of the Muslim Brothers for social change. This method is based on education and gradualism in presenting the comprehensive perspectives of Islam. Such perspectives consider religion as a system of beliefs, worship and morality and a way of life and reject the separation between these aspects (Shahin 1997:121-122).

- The growing influence of Salafi ideals (discussed in Chapter 1).
- International developments including:
 - The Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973. These placed a question-mark on Arab nationalism. These wars were followed by Israel's invasion of Lebanon and growing anti-Israeli movements
 - The Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979. On an ideological level, central elements within the FIS, the GIA and the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS) drew their spiritual inspiration from the mullahs in Iran. Despite the fact that Algerian extremists were Sunni Muslims, they used the revolution in Iran as a model. Essentially, the revolution in Iran gave similar groups throughout the world the hope of replacing repressive governments supported by the West with Islamic governments. This call was echoed in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia (under review). In addition to the strategic framework, extremists resorted to a broader international network (of countries faced with similar circumstances and ideological influences) by getting their supplies, advice and even recruits from a wide spread of countries
 - The war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan produced the Afghan *Mujahideen* and associated with the *Mujahideen, al-Qa'eda*. This marked a further break down of physical and ideological borders between Islamist extremist organisations throughout the world, followed by a new resolve. Their influence will be discussed under a separate heading

In reaction to growing frustration, Algeria decided to open up the political landscape by allowing the FIS to participate in elections. But this move had come too late, as by the time the FIS became the first Islamic party to be recognised, this Islamist movement had become a major political force. As a result, the FIS performed well beyond expectations and won 188 seats in the

first round of the 1991 general election, compared with only 18 seats won by the governing party, the FLN (Stora 2004:210).

To prevent an overwhelming FIS victory in the second round of elections in January 1992, high-ranking military officers ‘forced’ President Bendjedid to resign and took power. The elections were cancelled and the military launched a crackdown against the FIS. However, the loss of the first round of elections and the intervention of the military ultimately led to a serious legitimacy crisis, and the security situation deteriorated rapidly as Algeria plunged into the ‘Dark Period’. The FIS however unfortunately did not limit its targets to the security forces but fought indiscriminately against the Algerian people.

The following paragraphs discuss the primary actors.

The primary actors

Mouvement Islamique Armée (Armed Islamic Movement)

The Armed Islamic Movement (MIA) was the first reformist group to opt for a military approach. Mustafa Bouyali, a supporter of Sayyid Qutb and the founder of the group, had been outspoken since the mid 1970s before he went into hiding in 1982. Radicalised by Sheikh Alili (who left for France in 1986/1987), Bouyali formed the MIA as a loose association of a number of small groups. This period also saw the first clash between Islamists and the government, which took place on 2 November 1982 at the Ben Aknoun university housing complex outside Algiers. After 1992 most of the members of the MIA, including Ali Belhaj, left to join the FIS and other armed groups (Kapel 2003:163).

Front Islamique du Salut (Islamic Salvation Front) and Armée Islamique du Salut (Islamic Salvation Army)

The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was headed by Abassi Madani and Ali Belhaj. Many considered Madani to represent the moderate, while Belhaj represented the more radical side of the FIS. Salafi scholars, including Ibn Taymiyya and Hassan al-Banna, influenced Belhaj. Rejecting Western democracy, Belhaj accepted that the Islamic political system was based on consultation, which provided its source of legitimacy. The people’s ‘free choice of rulers, the accountability of the rulers to the nation and the precept that a state cannot claim loyalty unless it is legitimate’ were presented in Belhaj’s book *The Decisive Statement on Confronting the Aggression of Rulers* (Shahin 1997:131-132).

The FIS and groups such as the *Front des Forces Socialistes*, or the Socialist Forces Front (FFS), and the *Mouvement pour la Démocratie en Algérie*, or the Movement for Democracy in Algeria (MDA), were the first to oppose the military-controlled government. Winning both local and legislative elections, the FIS presented a clear policy to address local challenges. It was the first opposition party to call for a return to the values of equal opportunity, justice and accountability. It also called for the establishment of a free and independent Algerian state based on Islamic principles. Similar to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the FIS provided much-needed welfare and social services, which were seldom provided by the government. Using a network of mosques, the FIS also provided religious and social programmes (Shahin 1997:138).

According to Mossaad (1995:186-187), the FIS was ideologically influenced by two schools of thought:

- Traditional Salafi, in control until June 1991 focused on the literal interpretation of the *Qur'an*; and *Sunna*, was influenced by the ideas of Ibn Taymiyyah, Mohammed Ibn Abdul Wahhab, Abu al-A'la al-Mawdudi and Sayyid Qutb. Abbassi Madani, Ali Bin Hadj and al-Hashemi Sahnouni also formed part of this school of thought
- A second group, that was influenced by Algerian nationalism

In an attempt to counter rivalry and confrontation among the different Islamist movements (not all discussed), the League of Islamic Call, an umbrella organisation, was established in March 1989 under the leadership of Sheikh Ahmed Sahnoun (Shahin 1997:135).

Although a legitimate political force, the FIS however also hosted a faction with more extreme ideals. For example, after the municipal elections, 'some municipalities focused on addressing the immediate problems of the people, while others were more preoccupied with symbolic and moral issues, such as closing down bars, prohibiting mixing at beaches or imposing the veil' (Shahin 1997:140).

More extreme splinter groups emerged after the military cancelled elections. These included the AIS, formed in 1993 under the leadership of Abdel Qadir Shabbouti, alias General Shabbouti, as a coalition between the MIA and the Movement for the Islamic State in Algeria (MEI). Prior to the elections, Shabbouti, who did not believe that the government would transfer power, began preparing for armed resistance. Said Makhloufi, a former Algerian

propaganda officer in the military established the MEI in the end of the 1980s. The AIS also attracted members of the FIS who were imprisoned and oppressed, but limited its attacks to military targets (Shahin 1997:157).

At first, Islamic rebel groups targeted military bases and specific individuals who were opposed to their cause. In June 1992, the State Council President, Mohammed Boudiaf, was assassinated while delivering a speech (AFP 1992). Trade unionists, journalists, women's group leaders, teachers and others who spoke out against the rebels were also subsequently targeted. In reaction, the government detained thousands of suspected Islamic sympathisers without trial, many of whom disappeared.

As the violence across the country increased, it became clear by 1993 that there had been a major split in the Islamist camp between the FIS and the GIA. The GIA issued a warning to all foreigners to leave the country or to become legitimate targets. The situation improved in 1997 when the AIS declared an unconditional, unilateral ceasefire, apparently to prove that it was not responsible for the atrocities that damaged its popularity. More insurgents surrendered during amnesty in 1999.

Although no longer part of the systematic acts of terror, the FIS again attracted attention when its deputy chairman Ali Belhaj in an interview with al-Jazeera on 27 July 2005, made the following statement in reaction to the kidnapping of Algerian diplomats in Iraq:

(...) when our brothers captured these two diplomats, they did not capture them as individuals; but rather as diplomats and ambassadors, that is, they were appointed by the state. When the state appoints ambassadors and diplomats in a land which is under occupation, this means giving legitimacy and legality to the occupation, and this issue is impermissible in terms of religion, politics, or logic (...) I say to my brothers in the land of *jihad* that I am praying to God Almighty to help them conquer the occupation and the enemies; the tyrants of the twentieth century; an empire that has tyrannised countries through its military, media, political and economic force; a power that wants to dominate the world without having the right to that. However, history has taught us that regardless of the might of empires and of how long they last, they will finally collapse (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2005a).

In reaction, Algerian security officials arrested Belhaj for questioning, which led to the following statement:

In the interview with your respected channel, Sheikh Ali Belhaj wanted to complete his message to the *Mujahideen* who are holding the two Algerian hostages and wanted to tell them to release the hostages as a mark of respect to the Algerian people who have always supported the Arab cause, particularly the Iraqi cause against the occupier (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2005b).

Ali Belhaj again caught the attention of the state, this time through his son Abdelkader, who joined the GSPC in Boumerdes in 2006 and who was suspected of being involved in the attack on the gendarmerie station in Yakouren on 13 July 2007 (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007b).

Afghan Mujahideen

According to R dha Malek (2004:441), at the end of 1980 between 3 000 and 4 000 Algerians went through training camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan. According to General Tounsi in an interview with the author in May 2007, approximately 1 000 returned to Algeria, while an estimated further 1 000 Algerians left for Bosnia and Chechnya (the impact of the Bosnian *Mujahideen* had a particular impact on European terror networks). On their return, in contrast to the majority of the population, they wore Afghan-style clothing, beards and turbans and became known as *les Afghanis*. The Algerian Afghans became instrumental in the establishment of Islamist organisations such as the GIA. Although the GIA will be discussed under a separate heading, the following will provide a brief overview of the military campaign.

Simplistic analyses date the onset of Islamic-motivated terrorism to the interruption of elections in January 1992 and the banning of the FIS. It is, however, interesting to note that the campaign of terrorism and armed subversion began almost immediately after the elections were cancelled. This campaign followed a few smaller attacks, which were influenced by a long philosophical development. Emphasising this point, Ambassador Ramtane Lamaara in February 1998 told a US House subcommittee hearing on Africa that 'Islamist militants organised themselves into paramilitary groups much earlier, partly as a result of the return of the Algerian Afghans, who formed the hard core of the armed wing of the FIS'.

Veterans of the war in Afghanistan against the communist regime and Soviet troops took advantage of the new climate of freedom heralded by the February 1989 constitution to preach radicalism in mosques, telling their inspirational 'holy war' stories and sharing their military knowledge and training with others,

mostly among large sections of the socially disadvantaged and marginalised youth. Indeed, a spirit of rebellion became associated with the FIS. Driven by hard-line theologians and paramilitary activists, this fundamentalist/extremist umbrella organisation launched an open confrontation with the government in June 1991. Two FIS leaders were then arrested and sentenced to 12 years in jail. In November 1991, before the first round of parliamentary elections, a major attack on a border security check-point, Guemmar, was led by a veteran of the Afghanistan war known as Emir Abderrahmane Abu Siham, alias Tayeb al-Afghani, a notorious terrorist who was finally killed by the security forces in 1993 (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2006a).

Islamist movements which were prepared to impose their rule through their own paramilitary groups launched a full-scale campaign of terror, killing thousands of people, including foreigners, journalists and women, burning schools and industrial facilities and blowing up bridges, railways and power lines. Based on subsequent attacks, the target selection of terrorism operations in Algeria could be classified into four stages:

- Attacks aimed at security forces and government employees
- Attacks directed at intellectuals, journalists, lawyers, artists and foreigners, especially French nationals in Algeria and France
- Attacks directed at the general infrastructure of the country, including bridges, schools, railways and electricity supplies
- Attacks directed at the entire population

The period between 1995 and 1998 could probably be described as a black period in Algeria's history, categorised *inter alia* by collective massacres directed at rural and isolated communities. According to eyewitness reports, terrorist elements responsible for the massacre in Bentalha (Baraki), south of Algiers, on 22 and 23 September 1997 had a list of primary targets. This was an action that confirmed that these attacks were intended to terrorise and punish the population hostile to them, or those who formerly supported them but who had since withdrawn their support, or relatives and current supporters of rival armed groups (Amnesty International 1997:7-8).

During this stage, peaks of violence corresponded with major political activities, such as the 1995 presidential elections and the 1997 legislative elections. The aim was to intimidate the population to boycott the elections and to punish it for rejecting the extremist strategy and therefore to abort

the dialogue process initiated in September 1997. The darkest period in the chronology of massacres in Algeria began in the summer of 1997 and continued until the middle of 1998. During this period, civilians in villages were massacred weekly. Especially during August and September 1997, a series of massacres took place in dramatic succession that claimed the lives of hundreds of people. As the massacres continued, and the government and military forces seemed unable to protect them, villagers took up arms – with the assistance of the state through Executive Decree 97-04, which established *Groupes de Légitime Défense* (GLD) or better known as the Patriots – to defend themselves and their families against the GIA.

The frequency and intensity of attacks began to change during 1998. This phase was characterised by the disintegration of terrorist organisations due to:

- The mobilisation of civil society against terrorists
- An enhancement of the democratic process, especially by establishing elected institutions
- The strengthening of the counter-terrorist strategy through the creation of Patriot and self-defence groups
- The acquisition of experience in counter-terrorism initiatives from other countries, following a period of isolation
- Conflict within the terrorist groups
- The adoption of a reconciliation strategy that included President Liamine Zeroual's 1995 *rahma* or clemency law directed at the AIS. Under this initiative, approximately 2 000 fighters, predominantly from the Mitidja region, laid down their arms. In the same spirit, President Bouteflika's Civil Concord of 1999 resulted in the 'repentance' of approximately 6 000 terrorists (AFP 2005)

During this period, influenced by important losses suffered in their ranks, terrorist groups chose new and less hazardous tactics, including explosive attempts, car bombs and fake road-blocks. The damage and losses caused by terrorist operations were particularly destructive and had harmful effects. Beside human losses, terrorist actions caused important material damage through the destruction of industrial installations as well as schools and hospitals.

Groupe Islamique Armé or Armed Islamic Group

Probably the deadliest organisation in the conflict, the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) was formed as a result of an amalgamation of:

- The MEI
- A cell established by Mansouri Meliani that included Afghan veterans and young urban militants, later headed by Mohammed Allal, alias Moh Leveilley
- Hardliners within the FIS under Abdelhaq Layada, alias Abu Adnan, who became the first emir of the GIA

Abdelkrim Gharzouli, alias Kari Saïd, the son-in-law of Osama bin Laden, motivated the formation of the GIA at a meeting organised by Arab Afghans in Peshawar, Pakistan, in 1990 (Malek 2004:441). Under the leadership of Meliani, a number of Algerian Afghans began to organise themselves for what they viewed as an inevitable struggle with the government. The most radical members of the group considered the participation of the FIS in the elections as a betrayal. Ideologically, the GIA had since its establishment been divided into a number of different factions or cells that caused a number of rivalries and that ultimately led to infighting, thus weakening the organisation (Kepel 2003:257-260). The factions included the following:

- Jihadist-Salafists influenced by the principles of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–1897), Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905) and Rashid Rida (1865–1935). This faction originated from Afghanistan and included Qari Saïd, Tayyb al-Afghani and Djafar al-Afghani (emir of the GIA between August 1993 and February 1994). Afghani, a member of *Dawa'a wa Tabligh* from 1982, went to Afghanistan in 1989 and returned to Algeria in 1992 (Gunaratna 2002:166)
- Takfiris, who viewed society as impious and therefore justified mass killings
- Djazarists or Algerianists, who could be described as an association of technocrats and intellectuals who turned to violence

Cherif Gouasmi, a veteran of the Afghan war, largely formulated the GIA's philosophy and tactics. The GIA was immediately distinguishable by its willingness to target civilians. Its targets included government officials,

members of the security forces, journalists, feminists, intellectuals and French-speaking individuals in what appeared to be a bid to eliminate the educated classes that according to them have been contaminated by Western values.

Farid Hamani, alias Abu Selman, who was appointed leader in December 1996, was blamed for advocating the policy of village massacres. He was reportedly killed in January 1997. From 1996 onwards the 'eradicator' faction of the GIA undertook massacres of villagers aimed at terrifying the rural population, resulting in many fleeing to the cities and causing an internal displacement crisis. The group had always targeted civilians, including women who refused to wear the veil, as well as journalists and academics.

The GIA's controversial strategy of slaughtering villagers – including women and children – by cutting their throats, took place under the leadership of Antar Zouabri who asked Mustapha Kamel, alias Abu Hamza al-Masri (a veteran of the *jihad* in Afghanistan) who preached at the Finsbury Park mosque in London, to write *fatwa's* and collect funds as well as weaponry and explosives intended for the conflict in Algeria. Hamza, on behalf of the Religious Affairs Committee, requested Abu Moundher to write a 60-page manifesto, 'The Sharp Sword', in justification of its campaign against civilians who, according to the GIA, had 'forsaken religion and renounced the battle against its enemies'.

The GIA did not accuse the Algerian society as a whole of impiety (in contrast to the *takfiris*) until it became apparent that there was a lack of commitment to participate in the *jihad* against the unlawful Algerian government (Kepel 2002:411). This was followed by a *fatwa* declaring non-members infidels and thereby permitting their murder. In an underground bulletin distributed in September 1996, Zouabri issued a *fatwa* entitled 'The Great Demarcation' (*al-mufassala al-kubra*), in which he called the self-defence committees 'Harki militias' and 'Zeroual's dogs'.

Zouabri demanded that the population should choose sides and further warned citizens to stay away from places frequented by security forces. The religious judgments contained in the *fatwa* included 'application of divine law' to enemies (ie putting them to death), the expropriation of their belongings (*ghanima* or war booty) and the abduction of their women. A June 1997 communiqué from the group's religious interpreter, Assouli Mahfoudh, declared that the murder of women and children consorting with 'enemies of Islam' was lawful and that the innocent among them

would be admitted to Paradise. His readers were informed that those who had their throats cut in towns and villages were ‘supporters of the tyrant’ (*taghout*). These texts seem to have set off the massacres, but they also appear to have triggered the defection of several Islamist factions from the central GIA. Zouabri was in charge of the group until his death in February 2002 (Kepel 2003: 268; 411).

The GIA was particularly active in the west and centre of Algeria (under Tirat-Sidi Belabbas and Blida-Mtigah-Midia respectively), as well as in Algiers (Shahin 1997:158). The group also aimed to internationalise its campaign through:

- Targeting Algiers international airport to warn visitors away from the country
- Targeting journalists and in particular foreign correspondents
- Targeting foreigners resident in Algiers
- Conducting acts of terrorism in France

By 1997 the GIA was seriously divided. Support from foreign Islamist groups expected to be sympathetic to their cause had diminished amid accusations that the group was guilty either of un-Islamic slaughter of innocent civilians or of conspiracy with secularists in the security services. As a result, the following factions broke away from the GIA:

- The GSPC, which took much of the GIA command structure, based east of Algiers and in Kabylie. This faction will be discussed in greater detail
- The *Ligue Islamique pour le Da’wa et le Jihad*, or the Islamic League for Preaching and Combat, which was founded in 1996 by Ali Belhajar, the former GIA commander in Medea district, but which joined the AIS and disarmed under the Law of Civil Harmony (Turshen 2004:15)
- The *Front Islamique du Jihad Armé*, or the Islamic Front for Armed Jihad (FIDA), which, under the leadership of Mohammed Said, split from the GIA in 1993. Said claimed to represent the intellectual elite of the Islamist movements and targeted specific intellectuals including politicians and journalists (Kepel 2003:264)
- The *Houmat al-Da’wa al-Salafyyia*, or the Defenders of Salafist Preaching (HDS), which was founded in 1996 by Kada Ben Chiha, a former GIA

commander for western Algeria, as well as Ain Delfa and Relizane (Turshen 2004:15). Known as a previous leader of Afghan veterans in Afghanistan, Mohammed Benslim, alias Swelam El Abassi, alias Salim el-Afghani, was also in control of a number of active cells abroad. On 20 October 2003, the US State Department announced that it had frozen the US assets of a little-known Algerian Islamic group known as the HDS, which operated in the Relazine region of northwest Algeria (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007)

- Other smaller groups operational in western Algeria included the Salafist Combatant Group (GSC), led by Yahia Djouadi, alias Abu Amar, which was active in a triangle between Chlef, Tiaret and Tissemsilt in northern and western Algeria, and the Salafist Group for Jihad (GSD) under Abdelkader Souane, alias Abu Thamana, which operated in the Ain Defla and Tissemsilt regions (AFP 2002)

Despite the break-up of the GIA, Islamist terror and guerrilla activities remained a serious threat to the security of Algeria. Fighting was particularly concentrated in the two eastern provinces of Jijel and Constantine. However, what remained of the GIA was highly decentralised. As a result the GIA's indiscriminate *modus operandi* had led to the above-mentioned break-aways. The GIA was diminished as a result of internal conflict and successes by the security forces.

In addition to its activities in Algeria, the GIA also established a strong presence in Western Europe, where it acted predominantly as a support base, later used in the planning and execution of a number of attacks. One such incident proved to be a forerunner of the events of 11 September 2001 (9/11), when in December 1994 four GIA terrorists hijacked an Air France flight from Algiers. Their goal was to force the pilot to fly the plane into the Eiffel Tower. Their plan failed when the plane landed in Marseilles where French Special Forces stormed it, killing the hijackers in the process (Frontline 2005). In addition to the Air France hijacking in 1994, investigations into a series of bombings on French soil throughout 1995 led to the conviction of several GIA members, including Rachid Ramda. Ramda received a ten-year prison sentence in March 2006 after spending ten years in a British prison before being extradited to France in December 2005 (AFP 2006).

By 1998, due to its indiscriminate killing of civilians, the GIA lost tremendous support in Algeria. As a result, the GSPC absorbed much of the GIA's international network.

Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat or the Salafist Group for Combat and Preaching

As a breakaway faction of the GIA, the Salafist Group for Combat and Preaching (GSPC) focused its attacks predominantly on members of the security forces, adhering to Salafist interpretations and ideals. Initially, the group aimed to overthrow the secular government of Algeria and to establish a government based on Islamic principles. Hassan Hattab, alias Abu Hamza, the head of the GIA network in Europe, established the GSPC in 1998 and took with him approximately 700 guerrillas under his command. It is important to note that according to the testimony of Mohamed Berrached, a former GSPC member, Osama bin Laden encouraged Hattab to break away from the GIA in an attempt to portray a better image through its tactics and target selection, since *al-Qa'eda* withdrew its support for the GIA in 1996 (AFP 1999). Notwithstanding the direct influence of *al-Qa'eda* in the establishment of the GSPC, the GSPC was not one of the signatories to *al-Qa'eda's* fatwa issued on 23 February 1998, both because the GSPC was not yet officially established and because an open alignment with *al-Qa'eda* might have attract the 'unnecessary' attention of domestic and foreign security services.

Instead, Hattab issued a public condemnation of both the GIA massacres and aligned the GSPC with the peace process between the government and the FIS. By October 1997, the AIS, the armed wing of the FIS, had declared a ceasefire in a bid to draw a distinction between the AIS and the GIA. The GSPC really rose to prominence following the election of President Bouteflika, when it criticised those who accepted amnesty and even targeted other members of Islamist organisations. By 2001 the GSPC had become the most effective armed group in Algeria.

Additionally, the Amazigh (Berber) 'conflict' in Kabyle indirectly contributed to the support given to the GSPC, or at least the perception was created. The history of this conflict with the central government dated back to the French colonial period, during which the Kabyle region was recognised as the area where the political and cultural dominance of the colonial forces was most contested – ultimately producing a number of martyrs. In the period after independence, the new Algerian state had proved to be as intolerant as the French colonial forces had been towards cultural diversity.

Notwithstanding the principle of cultural diversity, the 'Arabisation' process initiated under Colonel Houari Boumediene was legally formalised in

July 1998 when Arabic was recognised as the only official language. In essence, the underlying motivation for the conflict was a struggle for cultural, linguistic and political representation. In reaction to the initial government intention to Arabise the population, a strategy by Islamic groups to Islamise the country was equally threatening to the Amazigh. The Amazigh community was called on 'to rise up in resistance following the spirit of independence (...) supporting the government's formation of self-defence groups in Kabyle villages' (Silverstein 2003:87-111). In essence, the conflict between the Amazigh and the government – as well as between government forces and Islamic groups generally – could be attributed to a history of ethnic difference that ultimately led to an identity crisis, creating an environment that could be manipulated by individuals and factions. Particularly after government proclaimed the Arab language law (on the 36th anniversary of independence) in July 1998, that stipulated that Arabic was the only official language to be used in documents, advertisements, films and public speeches (*BBC News* 1998). It is an interesting coincidence that the GSPC split from the GIA took place during the same year – without implying that the Berber conflict and the formation of the GSPC was related. Subsequently, some members of the public kept quiet and even supported extremists as long as the extremists, particularly the GSPC, did not target them. This explains to some degree the extent of the GSPC's operations in the Kabyle region, which also served as the GSPC's headquarters. Another important factor was the inhospitable terrain of mountains and dense forests that favoured guerrilla warfare.

The success of the GSPC in eastern Algeria was therefore not a coincidence. As mentioned earlier, some members within the Berber communities in eastern Algeria had a long history of conflict with the authorities. Frustration with the Algerian government also manifested itself in turning a blind eye, interpreted as 'support' that extremists, particularly the GSPC, received from some Berber communities in Kabyle (eastern Algeria). Particularly since the GSPC, in contrast to the GIA targeted the military (a common enemy). This also came during a period of growing frustration between the Berber communities and the security forces. For example, on 28 and 29 April 2001 violent confrontations erupted after Mohamed Geurmah was killed and three other young people arrested in Beni Douala near Tizi Ouzou for protesting against the government. In subsequent violent demonstrations around Tizi Ouzou police used live ammunition after running out of teargas that left (according to *El Watan*) 80 people dead and hundreds injured. Demonstrations also took place in Bejaia, while tension was reported in Sidi aich, El Kseur, Tazmalt, Seddouk, and Timezrit (Kassaimah 2001).

It is also known that the GSPC and later AQLIM made previous attempts to create the impression that both the GSPC/AQLIM and the Berber communities had a common cause and identity. For example, during the 2001 demonstrations the *Quotidien d'Oran* newspaper reported that Amari Saifi, Abderrezak El Para, based in the northeast and Kabylie highlands, led some of the demonstrators involved in attacking public buildings (Kassaimah 2001) – this allegation could however not be confirmed. Later in 2006, in a written communiqué released by the GSPC in which they claimed responsibility for the RBC attack the statement from the GSPC read as follows:

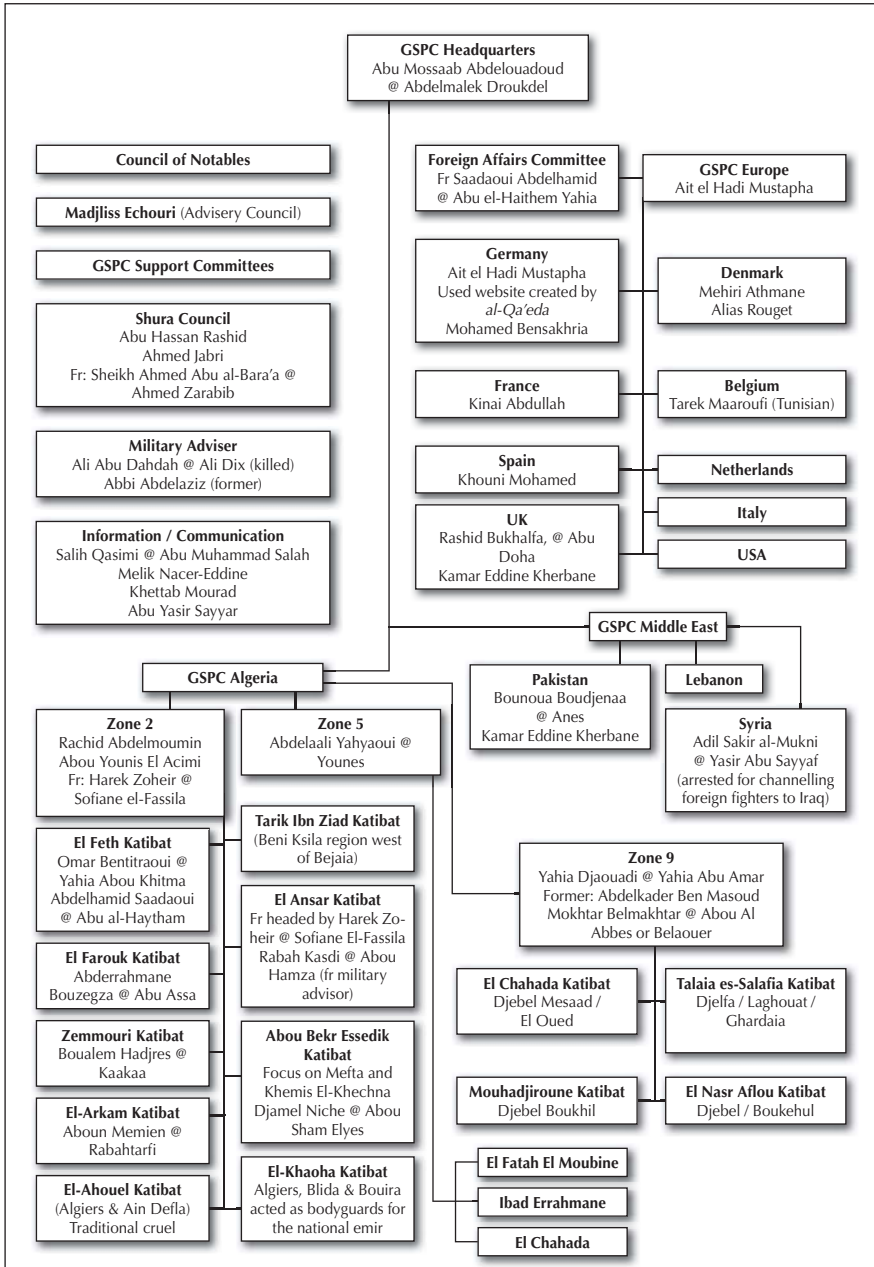
Allah...has guided a group of *mujahideen* in executing an operation that targeted crusaders working for the American company Brown & Root – Condor in Bouchaoui, on the road between Algiers and Zeralda. This operation took place on Sunday afternoon... with the detonation of a bomb on a bus carrying no less than 20 crusaders... This operation is a modest gift that we offer to our Muslim brothers who are suffering from the misfortunes of the new Crusade that is targeting Islam and its sanctuaries. We say to them: your brothers from among the grandsons of Tariq bin Ziyad will never be satisfied until the crusaders and their agents are expelled... (Kohlmann 2006).

Tariq bin Ziyad, a Muslim Berber and Umayyad general led the conquest of Visigothic Hispania in 711 under the orders of the Umayyad Caliph Al-Walid I. Tariq ibn Ziyad is considered to be one of the most important military commanders in Iberian history. He was initially the deputy of Musa ibn Nusair in North Africa, and was sent by his superior to launch the first thrust of a conquest of the Iberian peninsula (comprising modern Spain and Portugal) (Wikipedia 2008). It is, however, essential to note that this passive support was not given in solidarity to the cause of the extremists but rather in principle, as a force against the Algerian government. It was also not given by the collective Berber community. With the change of the GSPC's tactics under the AQLIM to include an indiscriminate target selection, communities increasingly began to change their perception – tipping the scale toward government's call to end the conflict.

Structure of the GSPC/AQLIM terrorist group

The GSPC is currently headed by Abu Mousaab Abdelouadoud (38), alias Abdelmalek Droukdel, born in Meftah, Algeria. He succeeded Nabil Sahraoui, alias Abu Mustapha Ibrahim, who was killed by the Algerian

Figure 1: Structure of the GSPC



military in June 2004 near Bejaia, 250 km east of Algiers. Droukdel is reported to have helped Nabil Sahraoui become leader of the group in the summer of 2003. He was also one of the leaders who forced Hassan Hattab, alias Abu Hamza, to step down. Active first in the GIA, Droukdel was close to Djamel Zitouni before Zitouni's death. Droukdel previously was the head of the GSPC's production branch and also led the Council of Notables, which included the officials in charge of the seven provinces in Algeria where the group was active. Droukdel grew up in the Meftah area, south of the capital, which in the early 1990s, at the beginning of armed activities, was one of the main strongholds of the GIA. Droukdel has a university degree in chemistry and electronic engineering (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2004b).

The GSPC went through substantial changes, including a name change to AQLIM. Figure 1 is a non real-time schematic presentation illustrating the complexity and extent of the GSPC's structure, including its international reach. Also please note that this representation does not include all the different substructures. Figure 1 is therefore only a brief overview of the most active domestic structures.

At the head of the GSPC is a national emir, supported by the Council of Notables. Reference is also made to an advisory council that essentially includes leading members of the organisation and acts as a decision-making body, electing the leaders of the organisation and setting its strategy.

Although its information and media committee was not a new innovation for a terrorist organisation, this committee achieved considerable visibility in 2007 when GSPC/AQLIM focused extensively on a media strategy, particularly in claiming responsibility for attacks in Algiers and beyond (including attacks in Mauritania). In 2004 the GSPC became the first organisation of its kind to distribute information through an internet website – www.jihad-algeria.com – headed at that time by Sheikh Abu Omar Abd al-Birrected as the former head of the information and media committee. Although the Algerian government reacted by closing a number of websites, GSPC/AQLIM continued to distribute messages on the internet. For example, in July 2007 the following message was distributed. After claiming responsibility for the 11 July suicide attacks, it continued:

We call on all our Muslim brothers to stay away from the centres and gathering (points) of infidels and apostates (...) The *Mujahideen* have, with God's help, regrouped, organised their ranks and refined their

plans and they are with God's will planning many surprises for the enemies of God in the Islamic Maghreb countries (Ersan 2007).

And again, after the September suicide attacks, AQLIM made the following internet statement: 'We swear to God to continue sacrificing our lives until you stop supporting the crusaders in their war, apply Islamic tenets, and stop your war against God's religion' (Black 2007).

After the attack targeting Brown and Root-Condor (BRC), the GSPC made the following statement:

God enabled a group of our holy warriors to carry out this attack targeting the Crusaders working for the BRC in Bouchaoui (...) We carried out this raid as a gift to all Muslims who are suffering from the new Crusader campaign targeting Islam and its holy places (Hunter 2006).

From 2004 the GSPC made a large number of documents available on its website, including manuals on how to manufacture explosives and poison. This development coincided with the GSPC's change in tactics. These methods, particularly the use of explosives, were previously associated with the *modus operandi* of the GIA in its indiscriminate target selection. The website, however, urged its members and supporters not to introduce these methods before 'consulting the *fatwas* of Osama bin Laden'. Despite previous allegations that links existed between *al-Qa'eda* and the GSPC, this statement confirmed a closer relationship that extended beyond a common philosophy (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2004).

In the aftermath of the attack on US-based KRB's BRC in December 2006, GSPC/AQLIM posted a video of the attack that also included footage of how the attack was planned and executed. This attack served as a preliminary to future developments, including the strategy of attracting new followers and funds through extraordinary attacks. After the 13 February and 21 September 2007 attacks, AQLIM media spokesman Abu-Muhammad Salah claimed responsibility for them (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007c).

Ahmed Zarabib, alias Ahmed Abu al-Baraa, the spiritual leader of the GSPC and a former prayer leader, was killed on 17 January 2006 in the mountains near Toudja, 260 km east of Algiers (Dow Jones International News 2006). The information and media committee attempted to contradict statements made by the government and its security forces, particularly after the latter claimed a success against GSPC/AQLIM by the elimination of Zarabib.

In addition to the GSPC's structure in Algeria, the GSPC as mentioned managed to take control of the GIA network in Europe. Claiming political asylum, extremists including Kamar Eddine Kherbane, one of the founding members of the FIS, established themselves in European countries. Kherbane for example moved from Albania to Istanbul, from where he eventually settled in the UK. According to Algerian security forces, Kherbane (who had been granted political asylum in the UK in 1994) also assisted in the establishment of the GSPC. In addition to meeting Osama bin Laden in Sudan in 1998, Kherbane was in charge of a liaison office in Peshawar for Algerians fighting the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. That office operated under the cover of an aid agency, the non-governmental organisation (NGO) International Rescue Islamist Organisation, which was reportedly funded by bin Laden (AFP 2001).

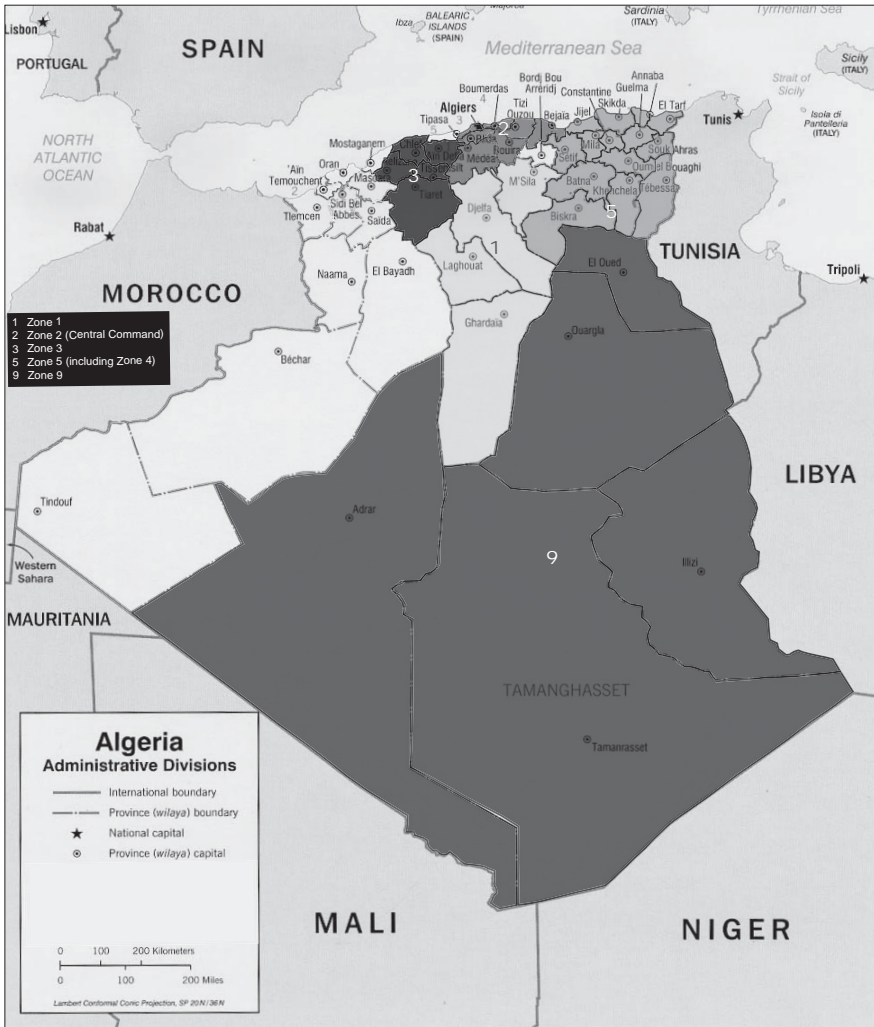
GSPC cells were already known to exist in Italy, Spain and France. Although they initially focused on collecting financial contributions to be channelled back to Algeria, these cells later turned to recruitment – providing a foothold for future *al-Qa'eda* operations that will be discussed in Chapter 5. Building on a long history, Algerian, especially GSPC, members began to form the foundation for *al-Qa'eda* cells in Europe. One such Algerian was Khalid Abu Bassir, believed to be one of the *al-Qa'eda* leaders in Europe (Guitta 2007).

The terrorist organisations' zone system

From a terrorist organisation point of view, Algeria and other areas of terrorist activity are divided into zones, of which zones 2, 5 and 9 receive particular mention here. Map 1 attempts to provide a visual representation of the different zones. Please note that the different zones operate in a fluent manner and therefore only serves as a basic framework. For example the operations of zones 4 and 5 overlap in eastern Algeria and is often a source of internal conflict.

Again as mentioned, despite this formal structure, the GSPC is more fluid. Of all the zones, most of the GSPC's attacks are concentrated in zones 2 and 5, while the other zones predominately provide support. In contrast to the campaign of mass civilian casualties inflicted by the GIA, the GSPC targeted government and security forces, with the intention to increase popular support. The areas of operation are also influenced by the origin of the particular emir. For example, Hassan Hattab originated from the Kabylie region, while Nabil Sahraoui came from the Tebessa region.

Map 1: Zones of the GSPC



University of Texas at Austin: Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection

Zone 2, which forms the central GSPC command, includes Algiers, Boumerdes, Tizi Ouzou and the Kabylie region. An emir heads each zone, which is further subdivided into *katibats*, or companies, with each *katibat* subdivided into three or four *fassilas*. A *fassila* in turn is made up of two *sarayas*, each with 12–18 members, often working in smaller groups of between two and six members.

During 2007, the following areas in the east were especially active:

- The headquarters of the GSPC, including Tizi Ouzou and Bejaia (230 km to the east of Algiers), extends from Aghribs, Yakouren, to the western part of Bejaia
- Prevented to target Algiers since 2003, the GSPC/AQLIM managed to direct its attacks closer to Algiers during 2007. In order for it to attack Algiers, GSPC/AQLIM had to re-activate previous inactive structures. Notwithstanding this, as a result of extensive counter-terrorism operations, GSPC/AQLIM needed to rely on structures in the centre and the east to commit acts of terrorism, particularly in Reghaia, Dergana and Algiers. Boumerdes, considered to be the gateway to Algiers, and Tizi Ouzou are of strategic importance to GSPC/AQLIM (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007d). Structures re-activated included:
 - The el-Feth Katibat. Among this structure's leaders were Abdelhamid Saadaoui, alias Abu al-Haytham, and Omar Bentitraoui, alias Yahia Abou Khitma
 - The el-Arkam Katibat. Active in Boudouaou, Keddara and other areas west of Bourmerdes (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007e). It is important to note that in order to reactivate both the el-Feth and el Arkam Katibats, the Abou Bekr Essedik Katibat played an important role due to its close proximity to Algiers (stronghold in Meftah)
 - The Abu Bakr Seddik group. Led by Moussa Kitab, alias Abu Hanifa, this group was responsible for the area from Khemis El-Khechna to Dar El-Beida, including Meftah. Taking part in the April bombings, this group is also working with the Erraad group under the leadership of Lounes Ferkioui, alias Cheikh Ahmed, which is active mainly in the municipalities of Larbatache, Khemis El-Khechna and Hamadi (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007d)

Other katibats include the El Ansar Katibat, which was formerly headed by Emir Harek Zoheir, alias Sofiane El-Fassila, who replaced Abdelhamid Saadaoui, alias Yahia Abu Haythem, as emir of Zone 2. In addition to leadership changes, the katibat was also responsible for the bomb attack on 15 September 2007 on a police apartment complex that killed two policemen and injured eight people. The Zemmouri or Zamouri Katibat under the leadership of Youcef Khelifi alias Talha in Ouled Ali was also particularly active (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007f). In December 2007 AQLIM announced that Rachid Abdelmoumin had taken over as emir of Zone 2 after Zoheir was killed in October (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007g).

As a result of continuing losses, the suspicion arises that GSPC/AQLIM plans to reform the existing structure into four zones (central, western, eastern and southern), thus forcing the GSPC to consider a new strategy that will be referred to later in this discussion. Although most of the activities of GSPC/AQLIM are concentrated in the eastern and to a lesser extent the southern parts of Algeria, developments during 2007 indicated that GSPC/AQLIM might consider extending its area of operations to the west of the country, particularly Tlemcen and Maghnia (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007h).

In October 2007 members of the GSPC/AQLIM leadership structure encouraged members to move their operations to western Algeria, which is considered to be safer than the east of the country, where there is a greater concentration of security operations. Subsequently, both Algerian and Moroccan security forces stepped up their presence in the region (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007i). However, even before this initiative became publicly known, members of the Algerian security forces clashed a number of times with terrorists around Sidi Bel-Abbes in the Tafsour region (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007j). In addition to these skirmishes, in June the Algerian Army discovered some 2 500 anti-personnel mines in Maghnia en route from the smuggling networks in Morocco to the central region, in particular Tizi Ouzou and Boumerdes (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007k).

For example, in July the security forces discovered a group active in the Ain Temouchent, Sidi Bel-Abbes and Tlemcen regions – the mountainous area on the border between Algeria and Morocco. During their search operations, the military discovered hideouts that housed material used to manufacture home-made explosive devices, as well as food. Approximately 15 suspects managed to escape in the direction of the Moroccan border (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007l). In August, furthermore, in the light of the increasing pressure on its members' movements, GSPC/AQLIM decided to move and to transport its home-made bombs, weapons and provisions on fishing boats to escape tightened security control and the several checkpoints on the roads. Zone 2 members, under the leadership of Soufiane Fassila, have already implemented this strategy throughout the whole coastline to move from Boumerdes Province to Tizi Ouzou (100 km east of Algiers) and Bejaia Province (300 km east of Algiers). The security forces believe that this strategy means that activities in the west of the country will be re-activated, especially in Mostaganem (400 km west of Algiers) and Ain Temouchent (470 km west of Algiers) (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007m).

Zones 4 and 5 are concentrated in the eastern part of Algeria. Amari Saifi, Abderrezak El Para, a former paratrooper in the Algerian Army, is probably one of the best-known emirs of Zone 5. Also a former deputy to Hassan Hattab, El Para received international recognition for the kidnapping of 32 Western tourists in 2002. El Para crossed the Sahara through Mali and Niger for the Tibesti region in northern Chad following the kidnapping, but was captured by the Movement for Democracy and Justice (MDJT) in Chad and handed over to the Algerian authorities in 2004 under Libyan mediation. El Para is currently in Algerian custody (AFP 2007).

The area approximately 80 km south of Tebessa is also thought to be part of GSPC/AQLIM's redeployment strategy, which include the setting up of explosives manufacturing laboratories and the location of a transit terrorist stronghold for recruits for Iraq and the Middle East (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007n). It was, however, hoped that with the elimination of its former emir Houari Youcef alias Mustapha Abou Omeir in May 2006, the remainder of the Ibad Errahmane group active in the mountains of Les Babors and in El-Aouana, El-Ansar and El-Milia would have decreased (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2006b). Due to its close proximity to the border with Tunisia, groups such as El Fatah El Moubine periodically include other nationalities, in particular Tunisian and to a lesser extend Libyan nationals. Members of the security forces continue to direct their attention to this region. In May 2007 Algerian security forces also discovered a training camp in S'hine in El Oued, 700 km south-east of Algiers close to the Tunisian border, as part of the El Chahada Katibat. According to the security forces, GSPC/AQLIM had recruited at least 60 fighters in the region over the previous three years for attacks in both Iraq and Algeria. Training as suicide bombers was also included in the curriculum of this camp; security forces discovered the last will and testament of five already trained suicide bombers recorded on CD-ROM (Reuters 2007a). In July 2007 the security forces broke up a support network and arrested 12 people between the ages of 17 and 40 (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007o). A month later the security forces killed four Libyan fighters in a bombardment raid (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007p), and in late October 2007 the security forces killed a further 15 militants and captured seven suspects, seizing large quantities of ammunition and destroying several hideouts in the region (Reuters 2007b).

Zone 9 includes the smuggling networks – weapons, contraband and stolen vehicles – of the Sahara (stretching from the Bou Kahil Mountains in Djelfa Province to the mountains in Souk Ahras Province in eastern Algeria) and several mobile training camps. Mokhtar Belmokhtar, alias Belaouer ('one

eyed'), alias Khaled Abu Abbes, acted as emir for Zone 9 until he recently left for Mali as a result of leadership clashes with Droukdel. Belmokhtar had met Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi during the year-and-a-half he had spent in Afghanistan in the early 1990s. During this period he received military training in the Khaldin and Jihadwal camps as well as at *al-Qa'eda* camps in Jalalabad. In 1995 he was appointed emir of the GIA's Sahara region, a position he kept after joining the GSPC. He was also involved in kidnapping Western tourists and in an assault on a military base in Mauritania (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2006a). During the height of Belmokhtar's leadership of Zone 9, his activities ran from the mountains of Djebel Boukhil, in the province of Djelfa, to the far south, including parts of Mali, Niger, Mauritania and Chad (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007q). In marrying the daughter of a Tuareg notable from Mali, a valuable alliance with the Tuareg was formed (*The Independent* 2004).

An investigation in December 2007 revealed that Yahia Djaouadi, alias Yahia Abu Ammar, was the present emir of Zone 9. Information also indicated that the activities in the south were controlled by two primary groups: the El Moulathamoun group under the leadership of Mokhtar Belmokhtar which focused its activities on Mauritania; and the Tarek Ibn Ziad Ou El Fatihine group under the leadership of Hammadou Abid alias Abdelhamid Abou Zeid which focused on Tunisia and north Mali (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007r). The fact that Belmokhtar was relieved as emir of Zone 9 further raised the possibility that he might operate in a semi-independent fashion, particularly since he feared for his life as a result of his differences with Droukdel. During 2007 southern Algeria, including M'sila, Djebel Boukhil and Ain Rich, was a terrorist hot-spot. In May 2007 Algerian security forces arrested six newly recruited members of a terrorist group between the ages of 20 and 25 in M'sila and six others in Ain Rich who were part of a support network (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007s).

Notwithstanding the abovementioned structure as mentioned, AQLIM decided to restructure the organisation into four geographical focal points: Central (Algeria); East (Tunisia); South (Sahel); and West (Mauritania). Considering its regional ambitions it is expected that AQLIM will enhance its recruitment focus to other nationalities in the region.

Modus operandi

Although the GSPC has predominantly focused its attention on members of the security forces, its attack on the Hamma main electricity distribution centre in

Algiers on 21 June 2004, in which 11 people were injured, might have been an indication that it was in the process of adopting a new strategy of indiscriminate attacks. A large section of the main wall of the state-owned Sonelgaz power station had been ripped open and part of the plant's façade had been destroyed. Debris was strewn across a street and nearby windows were blown out. On 22 June the GSPC information committee accepted responsibility (AP 2004).

This attack was in addition to bogus road-blocks, assassinations and ambushes of military convoys and security forces in isolated areas. In the name of GSPC Emir Nabil Sahraoui, alias Abu Ibrahim Mustaha issued the *Safar Ettaouil* (long journey) *fatwa*. This allowed members of the GSPC to kill any civilian who was more than 50 km away from his home at bogus roadblocks (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2004c). In June 2004 the GSPC 'declared war' on foreigners and companies. Sahraoui announced that 'we are firm in adhering to our principles and fundamentals (...) which require that *jihad* will continue until all religion is God's'. He denied that there had been any contact between the army and the GSPC. 'Contacts with the authorities will not happen, because they are inconsistent with the group's fundamentals, principles and aims and are contrary to Islam' (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2004c).

This statement reflected the GSPC's commitment to an escalation of violence through the adoption of new methods. In addition to suicide bombings – which will be discussed later – GSPC/AQLIM also re-activated earlier tactics adopted by the GIA. On 13 February 1993 the first booby-trapped car bomb was used in an attack on Defence Minister Major-General Khaled Nezzar, while on 8 October 1994 five booby-trapped cars were exploded simultaneously in Algiers (Stora 2004:214). After 2003 there were only infrequent attacks, but on 29 October 2006 two booby-trapped vehicles were exploded overnight almost simultaneously outside police stations in Reghaia and Dergana, in the eastern suburbs of Algiers, killing one person and injuring 14 others. In the first attack, a truck packed with explosives was detonated near midnight in front of the Reghaia police station 30 km east of Algiers, killing a shopkeeper and injuring 11 policemen. Thirty minutes later a car bomb exploded in front of the police station in Dergana, a neighbouring town, injuring three people (AFP 2007b). Although these attacks were the first by the GSPC, they may have been a confirmation that GSPC/AQLIM intended to change its tactics. The timing of the attacks may have indicated that the intention was not to cause mass injuries but to test equipment for future bombings.

Algeria's security forces, government officials, infrastructure and the broader public remained targets during 2007. Table 1 reflects some of GSPC/AQLIM attacks.

Table 1: Details of some GSPC/AQLIM attacks in 2007 (excluding suicide bombings)

21 January	A roadside improvised explosive device (IED) detonated under an army vehicle in a remote area in Jijel, 360 km east of Algiers, killing one soldier and wounding eight others. The attack occurred on a forest path located between the two communities of Beida and Garoua (Associated Press [AP] 2007)
28 January	A delegation from the administrative district of Dellys had a narrow escape when an explosive device was detonated outside the headquarters of the Municipal People's Assembly of Ouled Aissa, 45 km southeast of Boumerdes moments after the delegation had left (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007t)
2 February	A home-made explosive device detonated in the change room of a football stadium during a match (Xinhua News 2007)
7 February	An armed group killed Yakoubi Khelifa, a former mayor of Benchoud, in the northern Algerian district of Boumerdes. Before serving as mayor he also served in the region's local police (Xinhua News 2007)
13 February	Seven bomb attacks were carried out in a number of municipalities of Boumerdes and Tizi Ouzou provinces. In Boumerdes car bombs targeting police stations in Si Mustapha, Souk el-Had and Boumerdes left four people dead and more than ten others injured. The most serious of these blasts took place in Si Mustapha in the Isser district when a car bomb was exploded at 05:00 near the police station. The blast devastated the two-storey building, blowing out all the doors and windows and killing four civilians in a car. In Tizi Ouzou, the bombings took place in Draa Ben Khedda, Mekla and Illoula Oumalou (AFP 2007c)
24 February	One soldier was killed and two others were wounded in the explosion of two IEDs in Guedarra on the heights of Thenia. The two bombs were detonated by remote control, exploding simultaneously as an army convoy drove by (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007u)
3 March	Three Algerians and a Russian were killed and five other people, including two Ukrainians, were injured in a bomb attack on a bus near the town of Ain Defla. The bus was carrying employees of Stroytransgaz, a Russian firm laying gas mains between Ain Defla in the Medea region, and Tiaret, 340 km southwest of Algiers (AFP 2007d)
6 March	A home-made explosive device detonated during the morning in front of the headquarters of the (Berber) Baghliya gendarmerie brigade (45 km east of Boumerdes) (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007v)

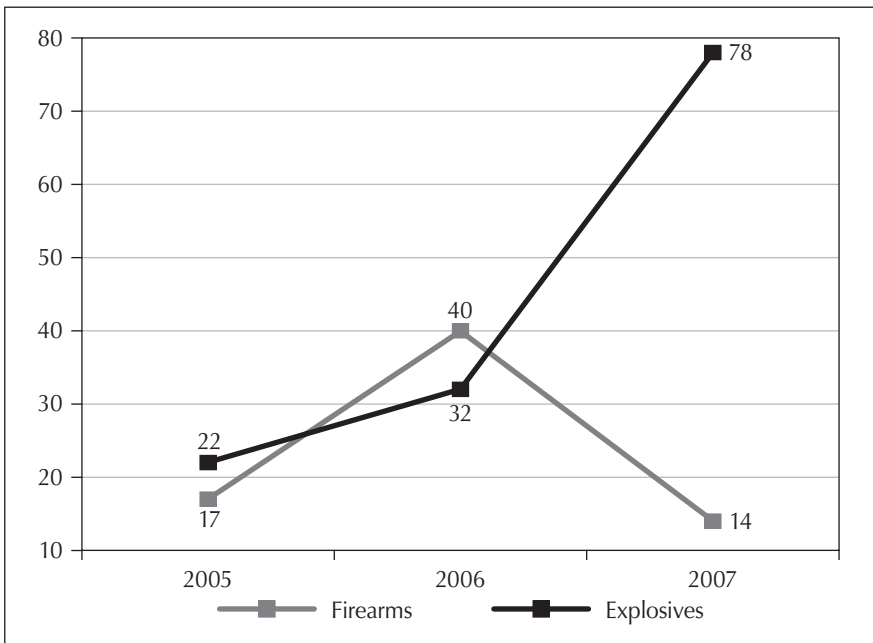
28 March	An explosive device detonated at a Boumerdes traffic circle located not far from the Omnisport arena. The explosion was felt throughout the city. It did not claim any victims but it caused structural damage. According to sources, the device was meant for the head of Boumerdes's Judicial Police Mobile Brigade who often used this route, which was also frequented by pedestrians. Two vehicles, a restaurant, a cafeteria and the headquarters of Boumerdes's National Housing Fund were damaged in the explosion. A mobile phone was used to detonate the device. This attack occurred two weeks after the break-up of two terrorist networks, one in Zemmouri and the other in Sidi Daoud (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007w)
1 April	The natural gas pipeline between Skikda and Jijel, which supplied residents of the Jijel Province, was blown up 300 km east of Algiers (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007x)
15 April	A gendarme was seriously wounded in the explosion of two IEDs in Si Mustapha, a municipality located 20 km east of Boumerdes. The two devices, which were set off remotely, exploded almost simultaneously as a patrol from the National Gendarmerie was driving past in the spot known as Boudhar, on the road linking Si Mustapha and Zemmouri (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007y)
11 May	A municipal guard was killed and two others were wounded in an IED attack in the Beni Mahboub region, El Milia, 50 km east of Algiers (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007ai)
11 May	An explosive device detonated in the municipality of Settara, seriously wounding a 52-year-old municipal guard. This region, bordering on Skikda Province, still remained infested by small terrorist groups despite large-scale operations carried out by the forces of the National People's Army (ANP) in previous months (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007z)
16 May	A small explosive device detonated near a police roadblock in eastern Algerian on the eve of parliamentary elections, killing one policeman and wounding at least two other people. The device, inside a package, went off in the poor Daksi neighbourhood of the city of Constantine, 320 km east of Algiers (Reuters 2007c)
16 May	Two explosive devices hidden in plastic bags were detonated in the working-class Daksi district of Constantine, Algeria's third-largest city. One blast occurred near a cafe and the other in the centre of a traffic circle. The bombs had been planned to go off at a nearby market before police intercepted the man carrying them (Reuters 2007c)
17 May	An explosive device detonated damaging a gas pipeline station in Jijel (Maghreb Confidential 2007)

29 May	An unidentified group kidnapped Amjad Wahbah (26), the regional director of an Egyptian-Algerian trading and manufacturing company and an affiliate of the Orascom group. Wahbah, an engineer, was abducted near his residence in Tizi Ouzou, eastern Algeria. The operation was the eighth of its kind since December 2005. Seven Algerians were also kidnapped for ransom. However, this was the first time that a foreigner had been abducted since the kidnapping of 32 Western tourists in 2002. Wahbah was released on 8 September 2007 (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007aa)
6 June	An explosive device hidden in a plastic bag exploded in front of the gate of the Tizi Ouzou bus station. The bomb, detonated at 10:45, killed a policeman and injured eight other people (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007ab)
7 June	Three soldiers were killed and another seven were injured in an IED attack in the Beni-Ksila region, 230 km east of Algiers. The roadside bomb, which was triggered by remote control, targeted an army patrol (AP 2007a)
11 June	A bomb was defused at a bus station in Tizi Ouzou. The low-powered booby-trap device was found by the driver of a bus coming from Boghni (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007ac)
13 June	Three people were wounded in an explosion in front of a cell phone store in Zemouri in the Boumerdes region. The attack came after a court in the region had convicted more than 40 terrorist suspects (AP 2007b)
22 June	Security forces prevented an attack on a major gas pipeline between the community of Draa El-Misan and the Aomar train station. The pipeline supplies large areas of Bouira and Tizi Ouzou. An attack on the same day the previous year on the same pipeline resulted in the cutting off of gas supplies to Tizi Ouzou and a large part of Bouira for four days (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007ad)
26 June	ANP explosives experts successfully defused two explosive devices that had been planted at the Aathouth bridge in the municipality of Fenaia, on the road between El-Kseur and Adekar in the province of Bejaia, 260 km east of Algiers (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007ae)
5 July	An IED was remotely detonated near a car carrying Hocine Mazouz, the governor of Tizi Ouzou, to a commemoration ceremony in the town of Ait Yahia. He was unharmed, but a policeman was injured (Reuters 2007d)
14 August	A car bomb in Larbaa, an eastern Algiers suburb, severely wounded Mustapha Kertali, a former militant leader of the AIS who had supported the government's efforts to end the violence (Dow Jones International News 2007)

11 September	A powerful explosion targeting the Tamchit apartment complex in Batna resulted in the injury of two children. The attack was reportedly the work of a group active in the Lahmar Kheddou region, extending as far as M'chouneche in the Biskra region (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007af)
13 September	An explosive device in a market in the city of Chemora, Batna Province, 440 km south-east of Algiers, was defused as a result of the vigilance of community members (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007ag)
14 September	Eight people were wounded when an explosive device hidden in a bag exploded outside a compound housing Algerian police officials in Zemmouri, 50 km east of Algiers, at about 17:30 (Dow Jones International News 2007a)
25 September	Two policemen were killed in an explosion in Les Issers, 70 km east of Algiers, in the province of Boumerdes. The Les Issers Katibat was suspected of responsibility for the attack (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007ah)
26 September	A businessman from Tizi Ghennif, 80 km east of Algiers, was kidnapped by an armed group in Touzaline, between Chabet and Souk El Had, in the province of Boumerdes (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007aj)
27 September	Two soldiers were killed in an explosion in Sidi Ali Bounab, on the heights of Naciria, 45 km east of Boumerdes, 90 km east of Algiers (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007aj)
27 September	Three municipal guards were killed on the edge of the city of Tadmaït, 15 km west of Tizi Ouzou, which is 85 km east of Algiers. The three victims were on a bus heading towards Ait Razdine, a village located on the heights of Tadmaït, when the bus was stopped at a bogus roadblock. Two guards were shot while the third had his throat cut (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007ak)
28 September	One soldier was killed and two were injured when an IED exploded in a wooded area near the town of Ain Ben Soltane, in the Sidi Bel-Abbes region, 450 km west of Algiers (AP 2007c)
7 October	A remotely controlled explosive device was detonated in Taouarga, in Boumerdes, as a military patrol went past, killing three soldiers and wounding three others (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007al)
8 October	An explosive device was detonated in Souma, Thenia, wounding a Patriot guarding equipment for a company doing work in the region (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007al)
8 October	An explosive device partially destroyed a police surveillance post near Tassalast beach in Tizirt in Tizi Ouzou (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007al)

10 November	A car bomb was detonated at 20:30, badly damaging a police station in Maatkas, 80 km east of Algiers, and wounding several people (Trend News Agency 2007)
9 December	A roadside IED detonated by a mobile phone targeted a convoy of workers of the Russian Sroytrans Gas company – the same company whose workers had been targeted in Ain Defla in February. The attack occurred as the Russian workers were on their way back to El Hayat base in the Baouaiche Municipality, west of Medea. A second roadside bomb was defused (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007am)
22 December	Security forces defused three roadside IEDs in the Yakouren forest in Bejaia, 260 km east of Algiers (Dow Jones International News 2007b)
23 December	Three soldiers were seriously injured in a roadside IED attack in the Khenchela region in the Aures Mountains (Dow Jones International News 2007b)
26 December	A roadside IED targeting a police patrol exploded east of Algiers, killing two policemen and injuring two others (AP 2007d)

Figure 2: Modus operandi of GSPC/AQLIM, 2005–2007



In addition to these attacks, GSPC/AQLIM continued their campaign of kidnapping as a strategy to raise funds for its activities. The targets were mainly Algerian nationals. New tactics included a rocket-propelled grenade attack on a military cargo plane at Djanet airport on 8 November 2007. This attack surprised the security forces (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007an).

The graphical presentation in Figure 2 reflects important changes in the GSPC/AQLIM *modus operandi* during the past three years, with particular reference to the use of explosives. As mentioned earlier, the name change set a new 'standard' in attracting attention and created an impression of strength. It also reflected a new tactic, namely suicide bombings. Another possible explanation for the change in tactics might relate to the actual strength of the organisation: it is to be expected that an organisation that keeps losing experienced fighters will opt for a less confrontational strategy. This explains the growing use of explosives rather than firearms, when the attacker might be killed in the attack. The use of explosives also allowed a small experienced core group of extremists to build the devices, with delivery being in the hands of less experienced fighters or suicide bombers, who can be replaced more easily than experienced fighters.

It was to be expected that the growing possibility of suicide operations became a reality after the formal alignment of the GSPC with *al-Qa'eda*. Since the GSPC accepted the strategy and philosophical principles of *al-Qa'eda* it should also adopt its tactics and *modus operandi*. Since the name change Algeria has witnessed a number of suicide attacks, which were previously uncommon in a country that had experienced 17 years of terrorism, an exception being in January 1995 when the GIA claimed responsibility for a suicide car bomb directed at police headquarters in Algiers (US Department of State 1996:18). Suicide attacks, as well as a few other attacks, are presented in Map 2. Suicide operations are indicated in gray.

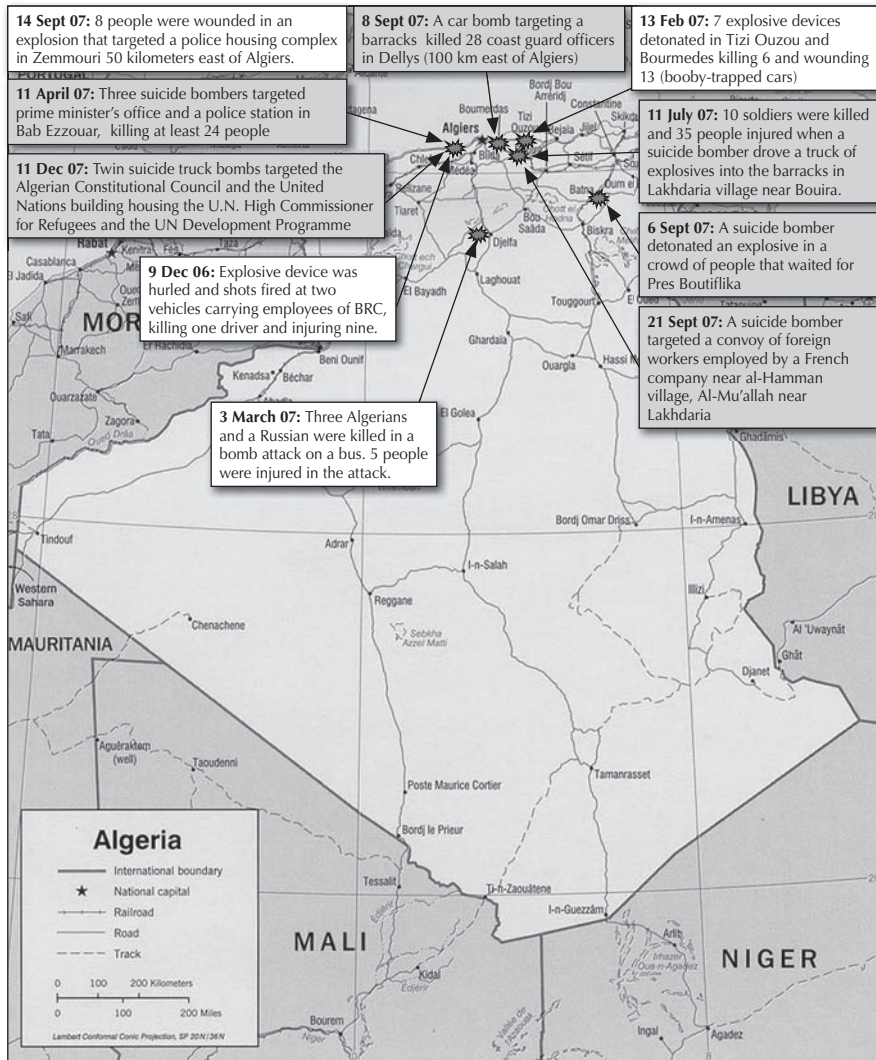
The identity of suicide bombers:

- Merouane Boudina (23), one of the 11 April suicide bombers, was one of ten brothers and sisters from a poor Algiers suburb. According to media reports, Boudina had been in and out of jail for drug trafficking before he disappeared a few months before the attacks (Lewis 2007)
- Mouloud Benchiheb, a multiple offender from a district of central Algiers, was recruited by the GSPC while serving a prison sentence for drug dealing (Lewis 2007)

- Sohaib Abu Malih, the suicide bomber in the 11 July attack, was one of four youths who had joined the group approximately a month before the attack (Meftahi 2007)
- Othman Abu Jafar was responsible for the attack on 21 September in which two French nationals, one Italian, their Algerian driver and five gendarmes were injured. In this attack a Mazda vehicle with 250 kg of explosives targeted a convoy of construction workers at a dam in al-Hamman village, Al-Mu'allah, between Lakhdaria and the village of Maala, 100 km east of Algiers (BBC Monitoring Newsfile 2007)
- Belazrag el-Houari, alias Abu Al-Miqdad al-Wahrani, was identified as being involved in the 6 September attack in Batna (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007ao)
- The 8 September suicide attackers on the naval barracks in Dellys included Nabil Belkacemi (15), alias Abu Musaab al-Zarqawi, who was from a suburb of Algiers. Although he had not shown any tendencies towards extremism, he had visited the mosque whose imam was later identified as a recruiter for GSPC/AQLIM (*Mail and Guardian* 2007)
- At 09:30 on 11 December two separate suicide truck bombs targeting the Algerian Constitutional Council in the Hydra area and the UN building housing the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the UN Development Programme in the Ben Aknoun district resulted in the death of 37 people (including 17 UN staff members) and the injury of 170 others (Meftahi 2007). GSPC/AQLIM claimed responsibility on the internet for the attack, stating that: '(...) this is another successful conquest (...) carried out by the Knights of the Faith with their blood in defence of the wounded nation of Islam'. The UN office was described as 'the headquarters of the international infidels' den'. The message concluded: 'The conquest comes to remind the Crusaders who are occupying our land and the plunderers of our wealth that they should listen carefully to the demands and speeches of our sheik, Osama bin Laden, God protect him.' Both vehicles were loaded with 800 kg of explosives (Nasrawi 2007). The suicide bombers were identified as Rabbah Bechla (64), alias Ibrahim Abu Othman, who attacked the UN building, and Larbi Charef (32), alias Abdel-Rahman Abu Abdel-Nasser al-Assimi, who attacked the constitutional council building. Bechla, previously associated with the FIS, was said to be in the advanced stages of cancer (Ouali 2007). Charef, who grew up in Oued Ouchayeh (a poor neighbourhood in Algiers), was arrested and prosecuted in 2004 for being part of a logistical support network linked to the GSPC. After his

release in the reconciliation process of 2006, Charef left for the mountains, where he received his training (Dow Jones International News 2007c). Both targets were symbolic: the UN was perceived as an enemy of Islam, while the constitutional court was overseeing elections that represented the illegitimacy of the Algerian government

Map 2: Suicide operations in Algeria



There were also changes in target selection during the past three years. While GSPC/AQLIM started to include suicide operations in its *modus operandi*, its target selection remained predominantly directed against members of the security forces as representatives of the government. Nonetheless in the past two years, the *modus operandi* changed from discriminate to indiscriminate attacks, resulting in an increase in the number of civilian casualties (see Figure 3).

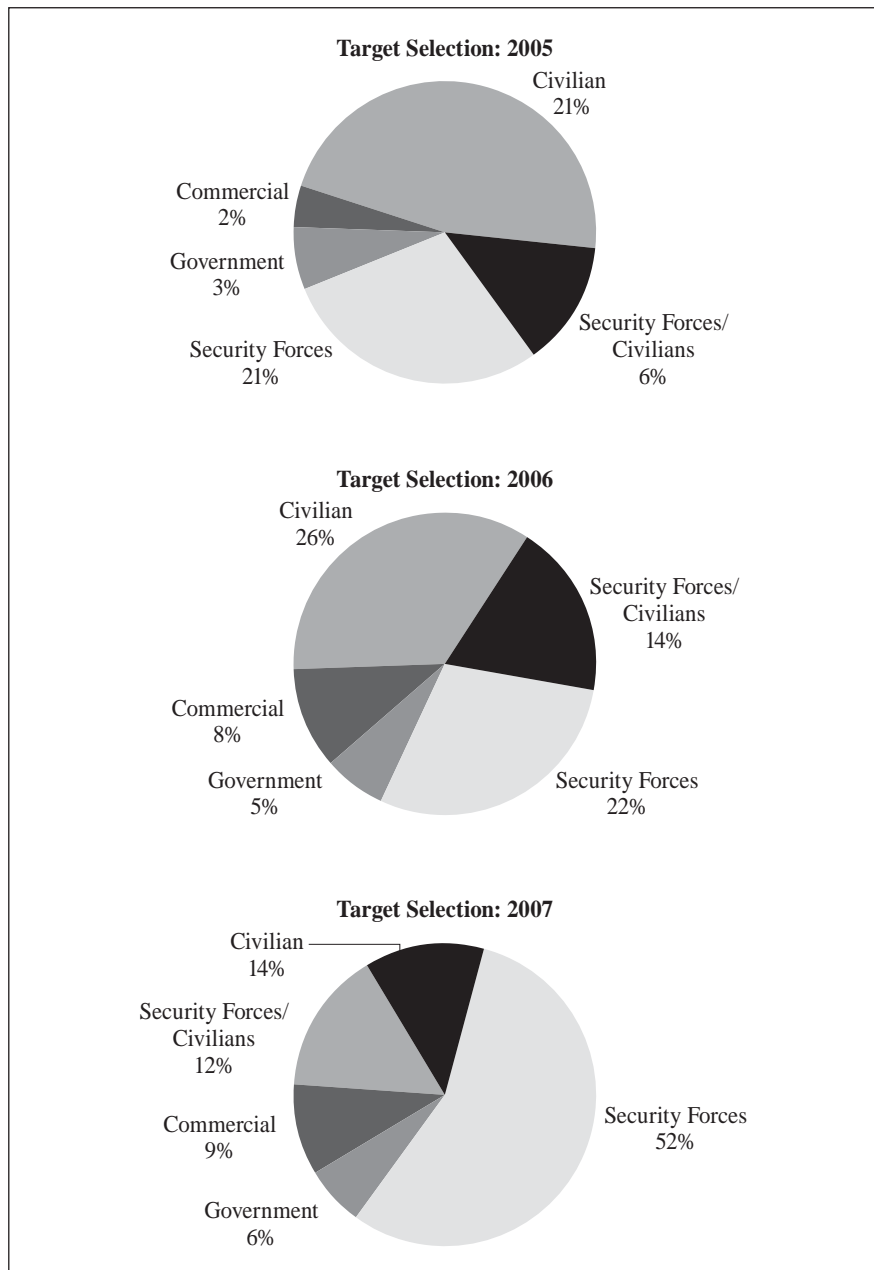
Attacks against foreigners

The fear that Algerian militants might redirect their attacks from Algerian security forces to foreign interests was also fulfilled on 10 December 2006 when armed assailants attacked a bus carrying BRC employees on their way from their offices to the Sheraton Hotel in Bouchaoui, 15 km west of Algiers. Soon afterwards, on 28 January 2007, GSPC/AQLIM detonated an explosive device directed against a delegation from the administrative district of Dellys, Boumerdes, outside the headquarters of the Municipal People's Assembly of Ouled Aissa (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007ap). The delegation, which was choosing the location of the future headquarters of the same community's municipal guard, symbolically announced that the low-intensity conflict that started in 1992 might not be over, as hoped, with the Algerian government's Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation.

An escalation of attacks directed against foreigners was confirmed in a statement by Abu Musab Abdul-Wadud, leader of GSPC/AQLIM on 8 January 2007, which read: 'To Algerians I say (...) the French and the allies of Crusaders who occupy our land [Islamic countries] are within your reach and so are the throats of those who sold the blood of martyrs.' This was a reference to the rebellion that had ousted French troops from Algeria five decades earlier. 'We are impatiently awaiting your [bin Laden's] instructions and recommendations for the coming period' (Reuters 2007e).

In a subsequent letter, Osama bin Laden wrote in February 2007:

(...) There is no objection, God willing, to what you are planning. That infidel country [France] has colonised the Muslim countries for a long time, and here it is today backing with all its might the group of infidels that is ruling the land of Algeria with iron and fire. The Islamic duty obligates us to fight that country even on its own ground, particularly as it is pursuing the *Mujahideen* on its territories and in neighbouring countries and subjecting them to

Figure 3: GSPC/AQLIM target selection, 2005–2007

harm and hatching conspiracies against them. It is unquestionably an ally for the Americans and Jews. Stemming from the responsibility of brotherhood in religion and the duty to extend support and cooperation, we urge our Muslim brothers everywhere to express their support and solidarity with you, to assist and back you with what they can and whatever is available to them, and to pray for you and impart their advice and guidance. From our side, and while taking precautions, we have given orders to contact you in order to agree on the targets most painful to the enemy in the east and west of its country (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007aq) .

The focus on foreign, particularly French, interests can almost be described as a return to the initial focus of the GIA. The first attack on foreigners was recorded on 21 September 1993 when two French surveyors were found with their throats cut near Sidi Bel Abbes (Stora 2004:215).

However, this rhetoric was not new. In 1992 a FIS publication stated:

Crusader France and some of its leaders of unbelief and atheism are working to encircle the FIS leaders who are abroad to impose a political blockade on the voices calling for the right to the Umma and the building of an Islamic state on Algerian soil (...) Atheist France is not content with its support for the just junta; it has even gone so far as to supply it with sophisticated military materiel such as night combat helicopters and chemical bombs which exterminate living things without destroying buildings (Gunaratna 2002:162).

In August 2005 the GSPC appealed to its supporters to carry out terrorist operations targeting Algerian officials in France: 'Our real enemies are not [Algerian] military officials only but civilians who pay their allegiance to French leaders. Support your brothers in Algeria by tracking down these criminals in France' (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2005b). The GSPC also suggested that its brothers search casinos and discotheques, if they cannot eliminate Algerian civil leaders, and target French Muslims who 'launched a denunciation campaign among Islamic communities' (PanAfrican News Agency 2005).

In a September 2006 video message commemorating 9/11, al-Zawahiri said: 'We pray to God that the GSPC will be a thorn in the throats of the American and French Crusaders and their allies (...) This should be a source of chagrin, frustration and sadness for the traitors and apostate sons of France' (Naravane 2006).

This call was echoed by al-Zawahiri in a video message on 20 September 2007, when he called for the ‘cleansing’ of French and Spaniards from Al-Andalus, the area of Spain and Portugal ruled by Muslims from the eighth century until the Christian conquest in the 15th century:

Oh our Muslim nation in the Maghreb (...) restoring Al-Andalus is a trust on the shoulders of the nation in general and on your shoulders in particular, and you will not be able to do that without first cleansing the Muslim Maghreb of the children of France and Spain, who have come back again after your fathers and grandfathers sacrificed their blood cheaply in the path of God to expel them. So be faithful to your religion (...) and to the blood of your fathers, and stand with your sons the *Mujahideen* against the Crusaders and their children (Eatwell 2007).

A day after the suicide bomber targeted employees from Razel, a French company busy with the construction of a dam at al-Hamman village, Al-Mu‘allah in Lakhdaria, Abu Mohamed Salah, a spokesperson for GSPC/AQLIM, claimed responsibility for the attack (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007ar).

The attack on 11 December 2007 signalled GSPC/AQLIM’s intentions not to limit their attacks to foreign workers and companies, but to target others, including humanitarian and diplomatic representatives.

Alignment with *al-Qa’eda*

Links between the Afghan *Mujahideen* and extremists groups and their leaders in Algeria have already been referred to. *Al-Qa’eda* also managed to get gradual access to the GSPC network in Europe, allowing *al-Qa’eda* to use these networks – the subject of a discussion in a later chapter. In addition to the ideological link, Osama bin Laden continued to support the training of GIA and later GSPC members in his camps in Afghanistan until 2001. According to *Jane’s Defence*, approximately 2 800 Algerians had passed through *al-Qa’eda* training camps in Afghanistan, making Algeria the third-largest contributor of manpower to *al-Qa’eda* after Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Through this strategy of providing training, *al-Qa’eda* also managed to establish alliances with followers from these organisations. In addition to providing training, Mokhtar Belmokhtar confirmed that Osama bin Laden, while based in Sudan, was in direct contact with the GIA, including later members of the GSPC. With the assistance of Dr Hassan al-Turabi, bin Laden opened training camps, including for Algerians, or those willing to participate in the conflict in Algeria. This step led ultimately to the cancellation of diplomatic relations with Sudan. Tunisia

is another country (as part of current discussion) that suspended diplomatic relations with Sudan in the early 1990s, over Khartoum's alleged support for the Nahda party. In addition to Sudan's role in the conflict in Algeria, Sudan also provided assistance to Egyptian terrorists in their attempt to assassinate Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa. These and other activities led to the fact that Sudan was categorized as a state sponsor of terrorism.

As mentioned earlier, *al-Qa'eda* influenced the GSPC's split from the GIA. At a leadership level, bin Laden was also in contact with Hassan Hattab. Through training at *al-Qa'eda* camps, *al-Qa'eda* operatives began to interact with the GSPC's followers. Loyalty to bin Laden subsequently led to clashes within the GSPC. Consequently *al-Qa'eda's* leadership sent a Yemeni *al-Qa'eda* lieutenant, Emad Abdelwahid Ahmed Alwan (killed during September 2002 in a gun-battle 435 km east of Algiers) to meet Hassan Hattab in an attempt to convince the GSPC's leadership to internationalise its operations (Meftahi 2007). Allegedly, Alwan was instrumental in helping *al-Qa'eda* fighters from Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia to settle in Yemen after the US invasion in Afghanistan (Reuters 2002). Hattab favoured a relationship with *al-Qa'eda* in which the GSPC should retain its Algerian character. In other words, according to Hattab, the GSPC should have remained independent. This meant that Hattab had to be replaced, and this was made possible through inner conflict.

Hattab's first successor as emir of the GSPC, Nabil Sahraoui, alias Abu Ibrahim Mustafa, allowed *al-Qa'eda's* influence to become more visible through the statements made by Nabil Sahraoui before his death in June 2004. In a statement in October 2003, Sahraoui urged Muslims to unite 'to raise the flag of *jihad* for Allah, be it in Palestine, in Afghanistan under the banner of Mullah Omar (...) and under the banner of the *al-Qa'eda* organisation in the emirate of Sheik Osama bin Laden' (Ouali 2003). In a similar tone: 'We strongly and fully support Osama bin Laden's *jihad* against the heretic America as well as we support our brothers in Afghanistan, the Philippines, and Chechnya' (Dow Jones International News 2004). In a statement published on 13 June 2004, Sahraoui, in addition to his support to *al-Qa'eda*, provided insight into the GSPC's domestic intentions: 'The Salafist Group for Combat and Preaching decides (...) to declare war on everything that is foreign and atheistic within Algeria's borders, whether against individuals, interests or installations' (Reuters 2004).

Nonetheless, Sahraoui's successor, Abu Musab Abdelouadoud, officially aligned the GSPC with *al-Qa'eda*. This alignment made practical sense: the GSPC in staying independent could essentially no longer justify its existence.

Consequently the GSPC began, as had the GIA, to lose ground as it began to target the civilian population. Momentum was also lost as ordinary Algerian people became 'sick and tired' of violence and through the reconciliation process (that will be discussed in a later chapter) the GSPC – as groups before – began to lose less committed footsoldiers. This was an opportunity that the Algerian political leadership seized in reaffirming its commitment to its reconciliation programme for those who wish to 'repent'. As a matter of survival, the GSPC had to adopt the new strategy of aligning itself formally with *al-Qa'eda* in reaction to President Bouteflika's referendum on 29 September 2005 in which he introduced the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation. Consequently, the Algerian government began to consider the remnants of the GSPC as a few thugs who no longer posed a significant threat to its security.

For example, during a visit to Tunisia on 31 January 2007, Deputy Interior Minister Dahou Ould Kabilya made the following statements with reference to the GSPC: '[the GSPC/AQLIM] has been almost totally eradicated and no longer poses a serious threat.' With reference to the threat the new AQLIM might pose to foreign interests, the minister stated: 'They could decide to attack a foreigner, an American or someone they consider their enemy, but it would be an isolated act and we have taken the necessary measures so that this won't happen.' With reference to links with *al-Qa'eda*, the minister further stated: 'Apart from verbal messages of support, there has never been, to our knowledge, direct aid from *al-Qa'eda* to the Algerians (of the GSPC), either in terms of logistics and material, or in the financial sphere' (AFP 2007d). Unmistakably, organisations that could pose a threat to regime security had been defeated, but one might question whether the GSPC or AQLIM really wanted a regime change and whether government at that stage realised that the GSPC/AQLIM had another strategy in mind?

In aligning itself with *al-Qa'eda*, the following is self-evident:

- A commitment to *al-Qa'eda's* cause in current hotspots (Iraq and Afghanistan), including recruitment
- The re-direction and utilisation of the GSPC network in Europe, in particular France, but also facilitating attacks against foreigners as part of *al-Qa'eda's* broader agenda
- Tactics that would include the use of suicide bombings
- A change in focus from a national to a regional perspective. In other words, a growing influence in the Maghreb

Regional profile

Only in Algeria *jihadists* managed to get a foothold that extends beyond a few acts of terrorism, making Algeria the centre where terrorists in the region can look to for guidance. The growing influence of the GSPC in the Maghreb region, despite the decline in the number of attacks in Algeria, is an unfortunate reality. Since extremists in Tunisia and Morocco were unable to establish the same level of activities as in Algeria, Algeria incorporated Moroccan, Libyan, Tunisian and Mauritanian extremists for a number of years. Individuals such as Mustapha Nasri Ait El Hadi, a Tunisian, for example, aligned themselves with the GSPC (Reuters 2003). In order to achieve closer cooperation, Rashid Bukhalfa, alias Abu Doha or 'the Doctor', the GSPC's point person in London, met Seifallah Ben Hassine, the emir of the Tunisians, in 1998. As a result of this close cooperation, Ben Hassine sent Tunisians to fight in Algeria (Vidino 2006:143; 147). The following discussion, as well as the respective chapters dealing with Tunisia and Morocco, will present additional examples.

The GSPC therefore developed as a transnational terror organisation. In addition to training being provided to foreign nationals in mobile training camps, Algerian security forces also made a number of arrests involving individuals from neighbouring countries. Although not a new development, this strategy will have an impact on broader regional security. This was particularly so after Emir Nabil Sahraoui initiated a new strategy in October 2003 in which he specifically recruited 15 Libyan and Tunisian Islamists who had returned from *al-Qa'eda* training camps in Afghanistan (AFP 2003a). In May 2007, Algerian security forces arrested three Libyans, former Afghan veterans between the ages of 22 and 25, after they had been recruited in Libya. In an attempt to conceal their intentions, the three suspects first travelled as tourists to Morocco and Algeria. On a previous occasion, Tunisian nationals first travelled to Egypt before flying to Algeria. Between January and mid-May 2007, 20 Tunisians were arrested and returned. In addition to Libyan and Tunisian nationals, Algerian authorities also arrested Moroccan, Mauritanian, Nigerian and Malian nationals (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007as).

The decision of the GSPC to align itself formally with *al-Qa'eda* formalised relations between *jihadists* in the region and introduced a new phase in the threat to security in Algeria and in the region as a whole. Notwithstanding the initiation of this specific campaign to include Tunisian, Moroccan and other nationalities in its operations, the GSPC structure in Europe had incorporated Moroccan and Tunisian nationals for a number of years prior. For example

Italian investigators into organised crime and money laundering since 2001 uncovered a GSPC cell in Milan in June 2003 that included a Moroccan and five Tunisians, including El Mahfoudi Mohamed, a Moroccan-born imam based at Gallarate mosque, north of Milan and Abdooui Iyousef who was the leader of the cell.

Explaining the importance of European networks in the operation of terrorism structures in North Africa in 2007, authorities in Italy and the UK arrested nine Tunisians who allegedly provided financial and logistical support to the network of GSPC/AQLIM involved in the April bombings in Algiers as well as in the shootouts with Tunisian authorities in December 2006 and January 2007. Among those arrested was Habib Ignaoua (46) who was arrested in London, while in Italy the prime suspect was identified as Essid Sami Ben Khemais (again referred to in Chapter 5) who was about to be released after a six-year sentence when the warrant was served (Rossi and Gumuchian 2007). In addition to recruiting fighters in Europe for training in Afghanistan before being sent to Algeria, Tunisia, Chechnya, Bosnia or Afghanistan, the Milan cell provided false documents as well as safe havens, vehicles, communication and financial resources channelled through Europe, North Africa and the Middle East (Dow Jones International News 2007d).

Although extremist elements originally from Algeria have been implicated in a number of transnational terror networks, the operational reach of GSPC/AQLIM was concentrated in Algeria until terrorists ambushed an army patrol in Mauritania in June 2005 during which 15 soldiers were killed. Mokhtar Belmokhtar, the former emir of Zone 9, claimed responsibility for this attack, referring to the operation as *ghazouat Badr* (invasion of Badr). The attackers lost six men, identified by Belmokhtar as Abu Ishak Ibrahim, the head of the assault group, Assem Abu Said, Abu Doujana, Abdelhakim, Bachir Abu Al Barra and Abu Mohamed Al Jinki (a Mauritanian) (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2006a). The attackers identified themselves with *al-Qa'eda* and received immediate congratulatory messages on the internet from other affiliates of *al-Qa'eda*. Among the most noticeable was one message from the Iraq-based Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (leader of *al-Tawhid wal-Jihad*, which later changed its name to *al-Qa'eda* in Iraq). Following the attack on the Mauritanian army, the 6 July issue of Morocco's leading newspaper, *The Liberation*, reported that *al-Qa'eda* had the grand objective of establishing terrorist bases in the Sahel similar to those existing in Afghanistan before the Taliban regime was dismantled. The remote nature of the Sahel made it difficult to control and patrol, allowing terrorists to use the terrain to their advantage. Documents seized by Mauritanian security forces from a local Islamist extremist group contained detailed instructions for staging attacks on targets within and

beyond the Sahel. The documents included a list of key leaders targeted for assassination, starting with Mauritanian Prime Minister Sghair Ould M'bareck (Mbuvi 2005).

The involvement and reach of GSPC/AQLIM was again questioned when on 24 December 2007 a small group of armed men attacked a French family on El Amel Road outside Aleg Town, east of Nouakchott. This attack was followed by an attack on a military base on 30 December near Galaouia, 250 km north of Attar, in which three soldiers were killed (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007at). In an audio tape broadcast by al-Arabiya, GSPC/AQLIM claimed responsibility for this attack (Mohamed 2007). Although authorities in Mauritania blamed robbers for the attack they later blamed Salafi extremists and arrested a few Salafi activists, including Sidi Ould Sidina, Mohamed Ould Chebarnou and Moustapha Ould Abdelkader, who allegedly had relations with AQLIM (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007au). According to Mauritanian security forces the suspects, whom they described as terrorists, were part of a sleeper cell. The public prosecutor's office announced that 'the attack was carried out by three known members of the Algeria-based terror network *al-Qa'eda* in Islamic North Africa' (Mohamed 2007a). These attacks placed renewed emphasis on AQLIM's regional expansion after changing its structure to four basic zones:

- Central – Algeria
- East – Tunisia
- South – Sahel
- West – Mauritania

On the eastern border with Tunisia, the year 2007 started with a confrontation with security forces near Tunis during which 14 members of the group were killed. It is suspected that the group planned terrorist attacks (AFP 2007d). In addition to this incident, the impact of the former GSPC and now AQLIM extends well beyond Algeria. This impact will be discussed in the chapters dealing with Morocco and Tunisia.

Suggested links between *jihadists* in Algeria, Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan were also raised when Madjid Habib, who was abducted on 28 April 2007 for ransom near Tizi Ouzou, spoke of his experience after being released in September 2007:

They were in contact with some people in Somalia when there were problems in that country. They also called Iraq and Afghanistan two or three times. They had available to them a shopping bag full of

mobile telephone cards, each of which they used for two or three calls before destroying them (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007av).

Influence of GSPC/AQLIM on the south: Mobile training camps

The influence of the GSPC is clearly not limited to Algeria. While neighbouring countries were predominantly used to support operations in Algeria during the 1990s, the GSPC realised the importance of neighbouring countries as its influence in Algeria decreased. Through acting as a base of operations well beyond Algeria, the GSPC became a regional actor to be reckoned with. Although the Algerian activities of the GSPC declined gradually after 2001, its threat to stability in the region increased. The first exchange of light weapons fire between members of the GSPC and Mali security forces on 11 April 2004, 200 km from the Algerian border, served to announce the GSPC's intentions to extend its operations beyond Algeria's southern border. It became clear that the intention of the terrorists was not to kill members of the security forces.

This incident should be seen in the light of the high level of resistance Abderrazak El Para of the GSPC at that time encountered from security forces in Niger and Chad when he attempted to set up bases in those two countries. Previously Mali was used as a base by the GSPC after the group had kidnapped a group of Western tourists in 2003 (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2004d). Following this incident, six Malians and one Mauritanian took an active part in terrorist activities carried out by the GSPC in Sahel countries and beyond. In particular, they provided weapons that terrorists from the GSPC were meant to have smuggled into Algeria in January 2004. These weapons were intercepted on 23 January 2004 by the Algerian army in the region of Ain Salah in Algerian territory. The following were implicated:

- Lieutenant Colonel Mohamed Abderrahman Ould Meiddou, an officer of the Malian armed forces
- Commander Seidou Safari, an officer of the Malian armed forces
- Ben Salah Osmane, a Malian soldier
- Baba Ould Chouikh, a Malian businessman in the town of Gao, Mali
- Mohamed Ould Laouinet, a Malian

- Mustapha Ould Laouinet, brother of the above, both based in Gao, Mali
- Abdelfettah Ould Marakchi (54), a Mauritanian businessman residing in Nouakchott, and the son of Merakchi Ould Ghade and Mounira bin Taleb (UN Security Council 2004:11)

In June 2004 the GSPC established the Sahara Katibat, based in the Tibesti mountains, for the purpose of recruiting new members from Chad, Sudan, Libya, Mali and Mauritania, and training them in the use of firearms and explosives (*The Independent* 2004). Libyan authorities even discovered GSPC training camps in the Tibesti Mountains on Libya's border with Chad – before Ayman al-Zawahiri announced in an audiotape posted on the internet on 3 November 2007 that the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LFG) had joined the *al-Qa'eda* network (AFP 2007e). Abu Laith Al-Libi, a leading figure in the LFG, expressed interest in joining *al-Qa'eda*, while leading figures of the LFG in Libya were negotiating with the Libyan authorities. Previously headed by Abderrezak El Para, the camps in Tibesti trained Libyan, Sudanese, Chadian, Malian and Mauritanian nationals (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2004e).

In addition to Mali, Niger also expressed concern over the use of uncontrolled territories by GSPC/AQLIM. Even Nigeria in the south revealed after the arrest of Mallam Mohammed Ashafa, the leader of the Nigerian Taliban, that GSPC training facilities in Niger were used. According to Nigerian security personnel, Mallam Mohammed Ashafa contacted, sponsored and assisted Isam Adam Sukur, Ahamed Taifi, Babagana Abdulkarim Galtamari and 18 other *Mujahideen* fighters, members of the militia arm of the Nigerian Taliban, to receive combat training on terrorism from a GSPC camp at Agwan, Niger. Ashafa also gave large sums of money to Isam Adam Sukur and Ahamed Taifi with the intention that the money would be used to receive military training from the GSPC in Niger. According to court proceedings, his network in Nigeria specialised in gathering information and carrying out terrorist attacks on the residences of US citizens living in Nigeria. Ashafa was also charged with 'receiving money from Talha and Na'deem (*al-Qa'eda* operatives) of the Tabligh headquarters, Lahore, Pakistan, for recruiting and training terrorists, whose main objective was to attack residences of Americans living in Nigeria' (Ige and Shaibu 2006). In January 2007, a Nigerian court also heard that Mallam Bello Ilyas Damagum, allegedly a member of the Nigerian Taliban, had sent 14 young militants abroad to attend the Ummul Qurah Islamic training camp in Mauritania. Those who received training included Nura Umar, Abdul Aziz Hamza and Mohammed Ibrahim. Allegedly Damagum in

2002 also received \$300 000 from *al-Qa'eda* in Sudan. This was kept in a London bank and used for recruiting members (Rabiu, 2007).

Mohammed Damagun, a director of a prominent newspaper in northern Nigeria, was also standing trial for allegedly funding 17 Taliban fighters to be trained in Mauritania. Damagun allegedly provided \$300 000 for this purpose (Mahtani 2007). Following these developments, in October 2007 Nigerian security officers arrested Abubakar Haruna and Isah A in Kano, who allegedly attended a training camp in Algeria. Incriminating documentation and firearms were found in their possession (BBC Monitoring Africa 2007b).

Again in November 2007, nine suspects were arrested in Kano, Kaduna and Yobe. Nigerian security forces charged several suspects, including Omar Husseni, Abubakar Adamu Kamba, Awwalu Haruna and Dauda Abduamid, with receiving training in Algeria by GSPC/AQLIM until August 2007. The suspects were arrested in possession of firearms, ammunition and material to construct explosive devices (BBC Monitoring Africa 2007).

Although only limited information is available on the Nigerian Taliban, note that there is no links with the Taliban in Afghanistan. The group, which consisted of an unknown number of supporters, was responsible for a number of attacks directed at police stations and government buildings in northeast Nigeria during 2003 and 2004 (Reuters 2007j). After counter operations involving the Nigerian police and military, the Nigerian Taliban splintered off to the Mandara Mountains bordering Cameroon (Agyeman 2007).

Mobile training camps are being used to train local individuals from the region as well as new recruits from Europe on their way to Iraq, in addition to their deployment in operations in the region. In this regard, Algeria serves as a first base for foreign fighters bound for Iraq, including those from Algeria's neighbours. For example, Mbark el-Jaffari was arrested in February 2007 in Reus, Spain, on suspicion of recruiting 32 Iraqi suicide bombers from May 2006. Before being sent to Iraq, those recruited were first sent to Algeria to receive training (AFP 2007f).

The camps training nationals from Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Nigeria, Niger, Mali and Senegal (Saleh and England 2007) are mobile in the real sense of the word in that according to vehicle tracks, small groups receive basic training in the use of firearms and explosives as well as ideological indoctrination for no longer than a few days before the camps move on. Gathering information without access to a satellite feed is challenging. However, through visiting the region, interacting with individuals in the region and applying previous

Map 3: Mobile training camps and areas of concern in Mali

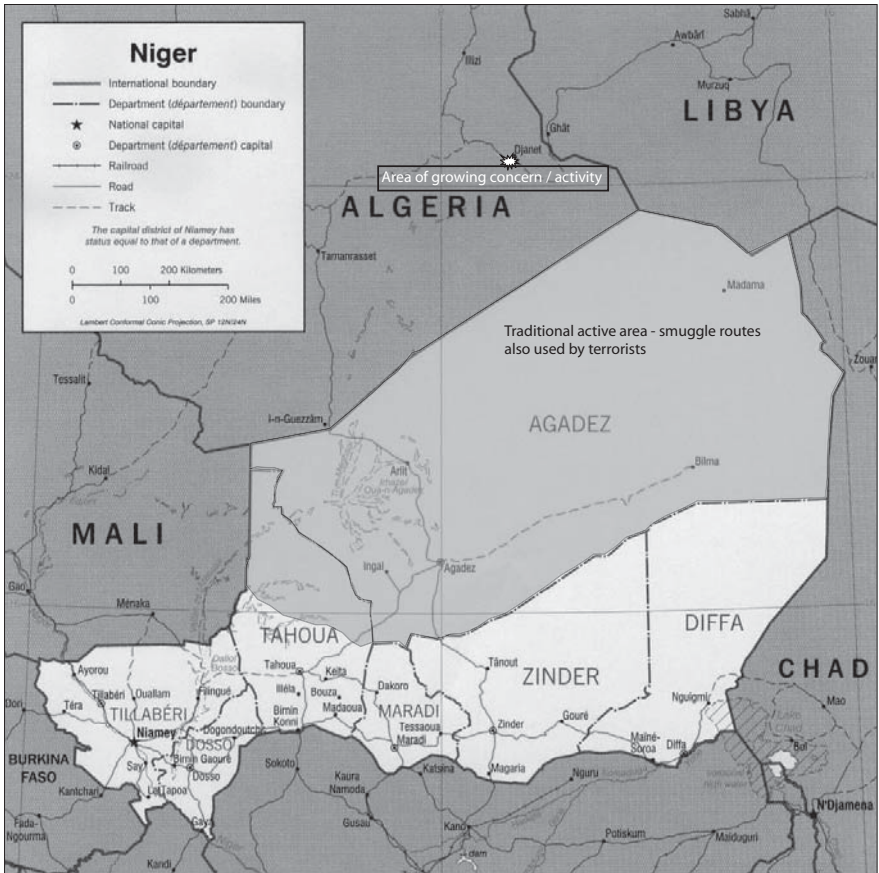


University of Texas at Austin: Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection

experiences, the areas shown in Map 3 and 4 were indicated as areas previously used to host mobile training camps, as well as areas of concern used as smuggle routes. In this regard security officials in the region made the observation that due to a growing overlap it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between smuggle and terrorist operations.

Border control in southern Algeria, despite being as difficult to monitor and control as any other areas of the continent, is especially challenging because of its remoteness and the established nomadic routes that have developed into smuggling routes. Subsequently, the Algerian government established alliances with the Tuareg, an unlikely partner. These will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Map 4: Areas of concern in Niger



University of Texas at Austin: Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection

Yet, despite the name change and the perception it created in the formation of a regional organisation, it would be a mistake to consider GSPC/AQLIM to be a single central organisation. Instead, cross-organisational cooperation is ideological and not operational.

Terrorism support networks

Networks include structures to provide assistance in the form of documentation, firearms and safe havens. Support networks involving members of the same family and friends are common, and are especially difficult to monitor and

infiltrate. Despite this, however, members of the security forces announced in December 2006 that it had successfully dismantled a terrorism support network of 28 individuals. The focus of the operation was a house in the Boudghane district of Tlemcen. All the occupants belonged to the same family. They included, as leader, the widow of a terrorist who had lived in the Sidi Zouaoui district in Ouled Mioune. After her arrest, she incriminated other people belonging to the same network who were active in the El-Gor municipality, 60 km from Tlemcen. The investigation revealed that four of the 28 people were directly linked to terrorist activities and eight were involved in facilitating GSPC/AQLIM movements, while the other 16 provided logistical support for the group. Five members of this dismantled group had previously been found guilty of activities relating to terrorism (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2006b).

It should be noted that although most of the attacks during 2007 were concentrated in the east of the country, support and weapons networks were located in the west and south of the country. This was an arrangement that had been well established during the long period of conflict in Algeria. In addition to the above-mentioned example, Algerian authorities broke up a weapons trafficking network in Maghnia in March 2007. Five of the arrested suspects had been active between Beni-rar in Morocco and Maghnia in Algeria. The security forces seized 480 detonators, 480 m of fuse, 108 anti-personnel mines and a Renault car. According to the security forces, the explosives had been purchased in France before being transported to Algeria via Spain and Morocco (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007aw).

In the south of the country, seven GSPC members aged between 19 and 46, under the leadership of G Merabet, were arrested in August 2007 in Bechar Djedid, 700 km southwest of Algiers (close to the Moroccan border). It is important to note that after their ideological training recruits were given the option to go to Iraq or to continue with operations in Algeria (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007ax).

Also in 2007, members of the security forces dismantled a number of logistical support networks in the east of the country, in places such as Blida, Jijel, Skikda and Bourmedes. For example, on 14 February 2007, Algerian security forces arrested 32 people as part of a terrorism support network in the Moulay-Laarbi region in Saida province (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007aw). The next month, they arrested seven suspects involved in a weapons trafficking network between M'sila and Bordj Bou-Arredj. During this operation, 200 kg of ammonium nitrate as well as arms and ammunition were confiscated. Although links with Iraq and Europe will be discussed later,

It is important to note that support networks are also used for recruitment. In December 2006 five members of a network recruiting terrorists for Iraq were arrested and jailed in El-Oued for 'membership of an armed organisation acting on behalf of foreigners'. This network, which was affiliated to the GSPC, recruited seven Algerians between 20 and 35 years of age to fight in Iraq. In January 2007 eight young people from the same region also left for Iraq (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007ax).

After the 21 September 2007 suicide attack, members of the Algerian security forces dismantled a support cell in Lakhdaria and arrested seven people, including a pharmacist who provided pharmaceutical supplies to terrorists (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007ba).

Notwithstanding the fact that most of the attacks were concentrated to the east of the country, GSPC/AQLIM managed to target Algiers. In order to achieve this, members of the group needed to have support closer to Algiers. During 2007 members of security forces made a number of arrests around Algiers. In March, for example, they arrested 19 members of a support network in Blida. This group was alleged to have been in contact with a group in Boumerdes that had been implicated in the car bomb attacks in Tizi Ouzou. Included in the group were a 72-year-old man, the sister of a known terrorist and suspects from Algiers, Tizi Ouzou and Boumerdes identified by their initials: MS (41), AC (24), HD (37) and HD (28) from Boumerdes; RM (32) and RS (26) from Algiers; MA (26) from Tizi Ouzou, and KA (45) from Les Issers (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007bb). The involvement of former repentants in terrorist operations during 2007 will be discussed in Chapter 6.

While support networks typically include individuals of the same nationality or – if a cross-border operation is involved – a second nationality, Algerian police in February 2007 dismantled a weapons network in Constantine, 430 km from Algiers, whose membership included a French national, two Tunisians and 24 Algerians. Also in Constantine, police raided a safe house on 11 February and seized 165 shotguns, 995 cartridges and 30 300. A 30-year-old Tunisian was suspected to be the network's financier, while a French national, Alain-Roger Raphael, was believed to have smuggled the arms from the eastern port of Skikda in a camper van. Police believed that a second French national, who was still at large with another 13 members of the network, had supplied the weapons (Reuters 2007f).

Although it is difficult to establish a relationship between support networks and networks recruiting fighters for Iraq, a merge into another could be expected for the following two reasons:

- Established support networks could redirect their focus to recruitment for Iraq as this cause is now more popular domestically than GSPC/AQLIM's own campaign
- Recruitment networks use the war in Iraq to attract new recruits who believe they will be sent to Iraq after basic training in Algeria but who are in fact being absorbed into GSPC/AQLIM's domestic campaign. This manoeuvre has led to a number of desertions

Reaction and survival of *al-Qa'eda* in the Islamic Maghreb movement

The GIA and the GSPC were faced with similar realities and challenges, particularly the decision to adopt an unpopular *modus operandi*. While the GIA indiscriminately targeted civilians in its campaign of mass killings, the new GSPC/AQLIM merger included suicide operations – which are unacceptable to the majority of Algerians – as part of its *modus operandi*.

These conflicts persuaded former fighters to make use of the reconciliation process. Antagonised leaders who were excluded from the process, because of their involvement in serious crimes (particularly murder), violently reacted against its followers in an atmosphere of distrust. For example, Abdelmadjid Broche, alias Abu Moukatil, an emir in Collo, Skikda, killed approximately ten of his own members in August 2004 after suspecting them of planning to surrender. There was an eventual realisation, however, that the GSPC would have to reinvent itself in order to survive (BBC Monitoring Middle East, 2004h).

In addition to the practical considerations that led to the initial decision to move closer to *al-Qa'eda*, a number of GSPC members felt ideologically closer to *al-Qa'eda*. Despite this reality, the GSPC was visibly torn between two factions: those who supported and adopted *al-Qa'eda's* vision, strategy and tactics and saw AQLIM's role beyond Algeria; and the older generation who supported the GSPC's independence, despite lesser influences from *al-Qa'eda* (past and present).

Since the death of Nabil Sahraoui, two emirs fought to control the GSPC – Abdelmalik Droukdel, who was appointed to succeed Nabil Sahraoui, alias Abu Mustapha Ibrahim, and Sadaoui Abdelhamid, alias Abu El Haitham (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2004f). Despite the decision to appoint Droukdel, he had not been the main candidate to succeed Sahraoui. Members of the GSPC expected Abdelhamid, commander of the second sector, or Ahmed Abu el-Para, the group's judicial and *Shari'a* officer, to be chosen (BBC Monitoring

Middle East 2007bc). This may have prompted Droukdel to adopt an autocratic leadership style and to replace established leaders with individuals whom he considered to be loyal. This step, however, contributed to further friction and loss of morale. As a result, former leaders seriously reconsidered the Algerian government's reconciliation plan.

The more dramatic surrenders during 2007 included:

- Said Ameur, alias Abu Bilal El Albani, a former emir of Zone 2
- Abdelkader Benmessaoud, alias Mossaab Abu Daoud, a former emir of Zone 9 (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007bd)
- Hassan Hattab, the founder of the GSPC, who in fear for his life surrendered on 22 September 2007 (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007be)

A well-founded fear since former members who had been killed included:

- Abdelkarim Kadouri, killed in Al-Wadi city
- Ali Boumhala, killed in Boumerdes in 2006
- Imam Abu Hafs, killed in an eastern suburb of Algiers in 2002 (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007bf)

In restructuring GSPC/AQLIM in an attempt to get rid of leaders who did not agree with his tactics and decisions, Droukdel:

- Replaced the emir of Zone 9, Mokhtar Belmokhtar, alias Abu El-Abbes Khalid, alias Belaouar, with Yahia Djouadi, alias Abu Omar Abd al-Birr, the former head of the group's information committee. Despite Mokhtar's close relationships with the Tuareg (the source of GSPC/AQLIM's financial resources and logistics), Mokhtar, who was a close friend of Hassan Hattab, fearing that he would be liquidated by the new leader, was reportedly contemplating retreating into Mali (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007bd)
- Replaced the emir of Zone 2, Abdelhamid Saadaoui, alias Yahia Abu Haythem, with Harek Zoheir, alias Sofiane El-Fassila, the former emir of El-Ansar Katibat. Saadaoui was ousted on suspicion of embezzling funds, but many thought the real reason was that he had rejected Droukdel's

decision to join *al-Qa'eda*. Zoheir (32) had gone into the bush in 1994 and was believed to have been behind attacks in Reghaia, Dergana, Boumerdes, Tizi Ouzou and Algiers (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007bg)

Another former ally of the GSPC, the HDS, based in western Algeria, divorced itself from the movement after the GSPC's alignment with *al-Qa'eda* (Chikhi 2007).

During 2007 Droukdel also lost a number of key figures as a result of operations executed by security forces. These included:

- Sami Sayoud, second-in-command of the GSPC, who was killed in Si Mustapha in May (Meftahi 2007a)
- Emir Djelloul of El-Ansar Katibat, who was killed in Benchoud a few days after Sayoud (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007bh)
- Ali Abu Dahdah, alias Ali Dix, second-in-command of Zone 2 and Droukdel's military adviser, who was killed with two bodyguards in July in an ambush in the hills above the town of Amizour, close to Bejaia, 230 km east of Algiers. Dahdah had been the right-hand man of Sadaoui and had also been described as the brain behind the 11 April attack (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007bi). Killed in the same ambush was Nour Mohamed, alias Haroun El Achaachi. Originally from Zone 9, Mohamed had acted as liaison in the smuggling of arms from the south (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007bk)
- Zoheir, whom Droukdel had appointed as emir of Zone 2, who was killed on 6 October 2007 in Boghni, Tizi Ouzou, 90 km east of Algiers, with Hamzaoui Abdelhamid, alias Abu Tourab, alias Abdelhamid Emir, the emir of the El-Farouk Katibat, and Osama Abu Ishak, alias Rabah. All three were linked to the suicide attacks in April 2007 (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007bj)
- Aissa Bousenna, alias Emir Serraka, from the El-Ansar Katibat in Sahel Bouberek, who was killed in a military operation near Sidi Daoud in Boumerdes in September 2007. Bousenna had allegedly been the mastermind behind the attack on the coastguard barracks in Dellys earlier in the same month (Dow Jones International News 2007e; AP 2007c)
- Djamel Khaled El-Kebir, alias Emir Farouk, a military adviser to Djound El-Ahoual, who was killed on 1 October 2007. According to security

sources, El-Kebir had been in Ouled Salah, Thenia, to coordinate suicide operations in the Boumerdes area (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007bl)

- Touikar Sadek, one of the emirs of GSPC/AQLIM, who was killed in October 2007 in the village of Douar, on the border between Zaitouna and Beni Yazid municipalities, Skikda Province (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007bm)
- Djemai Boualem, alias Houdaifa, was killed in November 2007 on the Adekar road linking Akfadou and El Kseur, Bejaia Province. Boualem was described as a liaison officer between the GSPC command and the El-Ansar Katibat, which played an important role in providing logistics, including funds and weapons (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007bn)
- Ali Ferdji from Kadiria and Aissa Necham from El-Mokrani, who were killed in August in the El-Mokrani forest in Souk El-Khemis. Both were former members of the GIA who went to the *maquis* (forest) in 1996 (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007bo)
- Chaib Khemissi (36), alias El-Atrous, the emir of El-Feth El-Moubine near Tebessa, who was killed in December with five other terrorists in Berzguene, El-Ma Labiod municipality, 35 km from Tebessa, after security forces received a tip-off from members of the public. The group had been on their way to a logistical support network in Tebessa (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007bp)

In addition to the elimination and arrest of key GSPC/AQLIM members, the security forces had a few additional successes, including the discovery of bomb-making laboratories. For example, on 8 October 2007 two bomb-making laboratories were discovered in Boumerdes (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007bq):

- The first laboratory was located in a blockhouse in the heights of Cap-Djinet near Dellys, 90 km east of Algiers. It contained chemical fertiliser, ammonium sulphate, ammonium nitrate and ammonium chloride. Approximately 20 ready-to-use explosive devices and other explosives being prepared were seized. The security forces also seized mobile phones, cables, tools, other chemicals and large storage vats used to mix chemicals
- The second laboratory was discovered in the jungle of Bouchakour, south of Les Issers. It contained ammoniac packed in bags, several home-

made bombs and other equipment used in the manufacture of bombs, including sheet metal, nails and scrap iron

The laboratories were believed to have supplied several armed groups from Zone 2, including the El-Ansar and El-Arkam Katibats, which were behind suicide bomber attacks in Algiers, Lakhdaria, and Dellys and other attacks on police stations and gendarmerie headquarters.

In addition to these setbacks, Mustapha Dadou, alias Zaid, the GSPC treasurer, was sentenced to life imprisonment in May 2007. Dadou, a native of Sidi Daoud in Boumerdes Province, was part of the Tarik Ibn Ziad Katibat, directly under Emir Soheib, who was killed in April 2007 in Mardj Ouamane on the outskirts of Amizour, in Bejaia. According to security sources, Dadou had been in the FIS from 1994 before joining the GSPC. Based on information received during interrogation, security forces broke up a bomb-manufacturing cell in Boukhiarna village close to Bejaia. Dadou himself was responsible for setting up three storage depots containing more than 300 containers filled with bomb-making materials. This supply dump was discovered in September 2006. Over a four-year period, more than 12 million dinars (US\$179 000) was extorted from businesses around the area as well as from ransom money collected after kidnappings (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007br).

There has clearly been a split in leadership over the inclusion of indiscriminate tactics, particularly the use of suicide bombings. As had happened in earlier organisations, the older generation in particular began to rethink whether it was worthwhile to continue, particularly as a result of public outrage. There was a feeling that without support in the form of safe havens and finance, the organisation would find it increasingly difficult to function.

Ultimately individuals such as Brahim Boufarik, alias Abu El Para, surrendered after the 11 April 2007 attacks in protest against the killing of civilians. He and others were offered amnesty from prosecution. He made the following statement: 'Several *muftis* inside our organisation are against using suicide bombings because they hit civilians. It appears that there is no difference between Droudel's approach and the GIA approach.'

Religious scholars questioned GSPC/AQLIM's new tactics based on the *Shari'a* as not being just. They included Sheikh Abdenasser, a former member of the GSPC's Shura Council, Ahmed Jabri, also a member of the Shura Council, and Abu Abbas, the *Shari'a* councillor in Zone 2 (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007bs).

In an open letter to President Bouteflika, GSPC founder Hassan Hattab described Droudkel's group as 'a small group that wants to transform Algeria into a second Iraq'. To the old guard, including Hattab, 'Algeria is composed of three factions: rebels, officials including security forces and the people. The first two groups are the combatants, while the third, or the civilian population, must in no circumstances be targeted. However, Droudkel's group allows one Muslim to declare another Muslim an apostate, or non-believer [*takfir*], and then kill him.' According to this view, Algeria is divided into just two factions: the rebels and everyone else, justifying indiscriminate attacks (Chikhi 2007). This ideological shift is currently receiving renewed attention, and a gradual change can be detected.

Following the loss of experienced GSPC members as a result of surrender, arrest or elimination by security forces, GSPC/AQLIM is trying to attract both foreign fighters and younger followers – between the ages of 16 and 20 – who are often inexperienced but who are idealists who can be easily manipulated. These new recruitment techniques have presented a new challenge to the security forces, in that it is more difficult to implement proactive measures against individuals with no previous records or who have not raised suspicion and are therefore unknown to security forces.

However, in September 2007 the security forces broke up a training camp for children in Thenia, Boumerdes. Of the 13 suspects arrested, ten, aged between 14 and 18, were still at high school. According to the security forces, the training camp taught students how to use weapons and prepared them ideologically for suicide operations. As an indication of the level of indoctrination 'all of the children had first names of Islamist leaders such as Abu Djellala, Abu Dahdah, Abu Haytem, or Ezzarkaoui'. They were paid between 2 000 and 3 000 Algerian dinars a week. On 23 September 2007, seven of these students appeared in a Boumerdes court on a charge of being members of a terrorist group. They received suspended three-year prison sentences (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007bt). Sixteen and 17 recruits respectively were found in similar camps destroyed in El-Oued (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007bu). Approximately 40 young people, aged between 17 and 22, were estimated to have joined GSPC/AQLIM during October 2007 from Sakiat Sidi Youcef, especially the slum areas of Ziadia and Emir Abdelkader. The recruits included members from the same family. New recruits were particularly targeted at mosques (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007bv). In addition to the use of mosques, the internet proved to be an extremely effective tool to reach and radicalise young people both in Algeria and in the rest of the world. Many young people, even from poor socio-economic conditions, frequent internet cafés where they have access to video material, training manuals and terrorist messages.

When he surrendered in August 2007, Zoheir Abzar provided additional insight into the recruitment techniques and morale within the lower-ranking members. He had been recruited in a mosque in Appreval, Kouba, an eastern suburb in Algiers, and after receiving ideological indoctrination he was moved to Tizi Ouzou. There he realised that the ideological teaching he had received did not reflect the realities, and as a result he had an overwhelming feeling of distrust. A similar account was given by Mohammed Majbour, the sole survivor of an operation in the Meftah and Khemis El-Khechna regions. Majbour surrendered during the operation and described the offensive as an 'emergency exit' (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007bw).

According to Benmessaoud Abdelkader, even foreign fighters were considering leaving GSPC/AQLIM after Droukdel's decision to include suicide attacks. He said that the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan, where there was an occupation, was different from that prevailing in Algeria 'where there is no occupation' (Reuters 2007g).

As a further indication of this inner conflict, a member of GSPC/AQLIM known only as Abdeldjebbar and active in the al-Nur Katibat in Ain El Hammam, expressed his discontent with Droukdel's new tactics in a letter to the security forces. He wrote that a number of leading members were now reconsidering their involvement in the organisation (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007bx).

In the aftermath of the September bombings, allegations were also made that during an August meeting between members of GSPC/AQLIM in the Djarrah area, on the border between Bouira and Tizi Ouzou, Droukdel had been replaced by Ahmad Haroun. This information could not be verified and might have been an attempt to divide and demoralise the remaining members of an organisation that had lost tremendous support (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007by).

An indication that the group may have been losing support was provided by a tip-off from members of the public that led to the arrest of Bouderbala Fateh, alias Abdelfatah Abu Bassir, in November 2007 with two accomplices known as Mohamed K and Fares K. In this operation, the security forces recovered 800 kg of explosives, three bombs and 20 detonators. Fateh, who had joined the terrorist group 14 years previously, was a former head of the GSPC/AQLIM foreign affairs committee, with direct contact to Droukdel. A member of the Lakhdaria group, Fateh had replaced Said Ameur, alias Abu Bilal El Albani, who had surrendered to the security services. After he joined the central command, Fateh had been replaced as the head of the foreign affairs committee by Sadaoui Abdelhamid, alias Abu el-Haithem Yahia, the former emir of Zone 2 (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007bz).

Conclusion

The Algerian case presented an unfortunate case study on the progressive escalation of violence under favourable conditions. It also serves as an example of the difficult challenges in restoring order in dire circumstances. Although the promotion of democratic principles should be encouraged as part of a counter radicalisation strategy, how to protect it from being manipulated for ulterior motives is a challenge that confronted not only Algeria in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It presented a catch-22 situation: reacting to the pitfalls provides justification, while not reacting could present more severe challenges to human security in the future.

Equally the history of extremist groups in Algeria might suggest that GSPC/AQLIM is going full circle. The following indications might be noted:

- Target selection – indiscriminate attacks. Although the GSPC had distanced itself from the GIA policy of killing civilians indiscriminately, its adoption of suicide bombing tactics defeated the former moral high ground
- Target selection – foreigners. Originally, the GSPC had focused its attention exclusively on the security forces and government representatives, with attacks on foreigners never being part of its programme. However, its alignment with *al-Qa'eda* led to the inevitability of attacks on foreigners
- Whereas Hassan Hattab and a number of other GSPC leaders defended the organisation's independence from foreign influence when *al-Qa'eda* showed official interest in the GSPC after its delegate for North Africa, Yemeni Emad Abdelwahid Ahmed Alwan, had visited Algeria before being killed in 2002, Droukdel, on the contrary, was accused of being an authoritarian leader and willing to sacrifice the GSPC's independence

Although GSPC/AQLIM no longer poses a threat to the Algerian government, it still poses a real threat to the overall security of the country, including its foreign economic interests, the region and beyond. Attacks directed at foreign companies have increased the possibility of future threats against the country's energy sector. In the light of the current plan to construct a trans-Sahara pipeline from Nigeria to Europe, this possibility remains of particular concern.

CHAPTER 3

TERRORISM IN MOROCCO

The French protectorate in Morocco came to an end in 1956. Differently from the Algerian experience, independence was not achieved as a result of a bloody liberation struggle. The ulemas, who supported Mohammed V, recognised the Islamic legitimacy of the king. Under his son, Hassan II arrogated to himself all authority to speak for Islam, claiming direct descent from the Prophet and adopting the title of Commander of the Faithful (*amir al mouminine*), by which he made his very person sacred. As such, he received the act of allegiance (*bay'at*) of the ulemas, of the descendants of the Prophet, and of the other members of the dynasty; but this allegiance had no contractual dimension (Kepel 2003:54-55).

While Algeria was confronted with a political legitimacy crisis as well as poor socio-economic conditions, Morocco's Achilles heel was predominantly socio-economic. Although Morocco's religious as well as secular authority is seldom questioned, Morocco still suffers from the same social and economic problems that drive political dissent in other Arab states.

As in the case of Algeria and Tunisia, a number of small Islamist organisations had been active from the 1960s and 1970s, especially on university campuses. These included *al-Islamiya* (the Islamic Association), *al-Adl wal Tanmiya* (the Justice Organisation) and *al-Adl wal Ihsane* (Justice and Spirituality). Fuelling these organisations were the following circumstances:

- Deteriorating social and economic circumstances led to the 1965 Casablanca riots, which were comparable with the Algerian bread riots of more than 20 years later. Growing urbanisation contributed to increasing unemployment, and a shortage of housing led to the burgeoning of shantytowns, a source of future radicalisation and acts of terrorism. King Hassan II reacted by suspending the constitution, disbanding parliament and limiting the influence of political parties
- The political vulnerability of King Hassan manifested itself in two coup attempts, in 1971 and 1972. In 1974 the king reasserted Morocco's historic claim to the Western Sahara as a way of mobilising society as a

whole to defend Morocco's territorial integrity. The monarchy became a symbol of the nation, with most organisations subsequently accepting the legitimacy of the monarchy

- However, under the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood, 20 underground organisations had come into being by 1986 in Rabat alone, each with its own structure, leadership and ideology (Shahin 1997:172)

As provided by Article 2 of Dahir No 1-58-376 of 15 November 1958, regulating the right of association, as amended by Dahir No 1-02-206 of 24 July 2002, 'any association pursuing a cause or an objective which is illicit or contrary to the law and morality or which aims at undermining the Islamic religion, territorial integrity or the monarchy or at inciting discrimination shall be void' (UN Security Council 2006:5). Within these boundaries, the activities of groups and associations are usually tolerated.

Although the above three basic principles provide a framework for religious organisations and associations, international developments – such as the Iranian revolution and other developments discussed in the chapter on Algeria – led to a change in the perception of the Moroccan government. Subsequently, these structures were closely monitored, explaining mass arrest campaigns and closer monitoring of activities at mosques.

While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss all the groups active in Morocco, brief reference will be made to the following organisations:

- *Jam'yya al-Ba'th al-Islami* or the Association of Islamic Resurrection. Founded by Islail al-Khatib in Tetouan, the association aimed to create an awareness that Islam was the only solution. Considered as a Salafi organisation influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood, the Association of Islamic Resurrection did not challenge the legitimacy of the monarchy. Although critical of its non-Islamic features, it opted to work within the monarchy (Shahin 1997:174-175).
- *Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn* or the Muslim Brotherhood in Morocco. Although a number of groups exist that were influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, a similar organisation came into existence in Morocco. Based in Casablanca, the Muslim Brotherhood formed a number of cells in other cities. Establishing an Islamic state through legal channels was also the Muslim Brotherhood's main objective. However, its challenge to the official religious establishment, its claim that the monarchy was un-Islamic and its view that political parties were not acting in the best interests of the Muslim

community set it on a collision course with the establishment. Unlike the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood remained covert and did not openly attract support. In addition to a lack of growth, internal differences detrimentally affected the Muslim Brotherhood's effectiveness and sustainability (Shahin 1997:178-179).

- *Al-Shabiba* or the Moroccan Youth Association. Founded by Abdel Karim Mouti in 1969, this was another covert organisation aimed at achieving reform through an Islamic revolution. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood also influenced it, particularly the ideas of Sayyid Qutb. As a clandestine organisation, the association was structured in cells, some of them based in universities, secondary schools and mosques. In addition to its covert cell structures, *al-Shabiba* initiated an overt structure and agenda. In presenting *al-Shabiba* as an apolitical religious association advocating the preservation of Islamic values through non-violent means, Mouti attempted to divert growing government suspicion and to attract public support. Following the lead of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, *al-Shabiba* began providing basic services, such as public health and adult education in addressing illiteracy. However, the arrest of the association's key leaders was effective in dismantling the organisational structure. *Al-Shabiba*'s decision not to support King Hassan in the Green March in 1975 led to its banning in 1975. The Moroccan government accused *al-Shabiba* of having assassinated Omar Bin Jelloun, the leader of the General Union of Moroccan Workers. Security forces subsequently prosecuted 71 *al-Shabiba* members for 'forming an association of criminals, plotting the overthrow of King Hassan, creating an Islamic republic, distributing Iranian-style literature and belonging to the banned Islamic Youth Association'. Mouti was put on trial in absentia, but escaped to Saudi Arabia (living allegedly currently in Libya). *Al-Shabiba* split into a number of smaller organisations, including the Revolutionary Commission, the Islamic Students Vanguard and the Islamic Group and the Movement of the *Mujahideen*. In October 1985, 30 members of the *Mujahideen* were tried in Marrakesh on charges of attempting to overthrow the government. They received sentences ranging from one year to life (Shahin 1997:184-188).
- *Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya* or the Islamic Group. This was one of *al-Shabiba* splinter groups. Previously known as the Rabat group, the split took place under the leadership of Abd al-Ilah Benkiran in 1981. Shahin (1997:189) summarised the objectives of this religious organisation as 'renewing the understanding of religion, calling for the respect of individual rights and public freedom, advocating the implementation of the *Shari'a*, improving the material and living conditions of Muslims, performing charitable work,

achieving comprehensive cultural renaissance, working to accomplish Muslim unity and condemning violence'. In 1992 *al-Gama'a* changed its name to *Harakat al-Islah wa al-Tajdid al-Maghribyya*, or the Moroccan Movement for Reform and Renewal (HATM), in an attempt to prevent misperceptions of the aims and objectives of the organisation. HATM participated in the political process after forming a partnership with the Constitutional Popular Movement, an established political party.

- *Al-Adl wal Ihasne*. This organisation was founded by Abdesslam Yassin in 1979 as an offshoot of *al-Gama'a*. In placing *al-Adl wal Ihasne* on a collision course with the monarch, Yassin claimed that he was a member of the sharifian family and, like King Hassan, a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad. Although, from the time of its formation, *al-Adl wal Ihasne* differed from the other organisations referred to in this discussion in having an extremist undertone, it was not implicated in any acts of violence. Its recruitment policy targeted university and high school students, civil servants, teachers and ordinary workers in the larger cities. The organisation was banned in 1985 (Shahin 1997:193-195). As a result, one of Morocco's largest opposition groups was excluded from the political process on the grounds that it wanted to limit the king's power. *Al-Adl wal Ihasne* also rejected the king's role as Commander of the Faithful (*amir amoumine*) (Ghanmi 2007). Following the lead of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, *al-Adl wal Ihasne* promoted itself as a party of the masses able to help improve social conditions.

In addition to the country's political circumstances, Morocco's high unemployment, inadequate social services and rapidly growing population have inevitably led many Moroccans to feel disenfranchised and dissatisfied. Making matters worse is the question of illiteracy, a major social issue in a country where nearly half the population of 30 million cannot read or write (MEED Quarterly Report 2003).

Illiterate Moroccans, rather than educated Moroccans, have formed the majority of those falling under the spell of the Wahhabi version of Islam promoted by a number of wealthy private Saudi Arabians throughout North Africa since the 1970s. Relying on books, cassettes and later DVDs for its communication, Wahhabism presents a fanatical and puritanical view of Islam that is more intolerant than traditional Moroccan Islamic teaching towards Jews and women. Such preaching cannot be underestimated in a country where the state has so evidently failed to educate all its citizens. Coupled with the spread of extremist ideology within poor communities, cell structures have also gradually spread to university campuses. Therefore targeting both

educated and uneducated members of society. Morocco has a population of mostly Sunni Muslims with small Christian and Jewish communities.

The reforms of recent years have not been accompanied by improved employment opportunities or better living standards, with the result that many Moroccans have become vulnerable to extremism. When King Mohammed began to encourage the idea of greater rights for women, Islamic parties resisted and Morocco remains in many ways a deeply conservative society.

History of terrorism in Morocco

As a smaller number of Afghan *Mujahideen* returned to Morocco, the political environment was quite different from that in Algeria. As part of King Hassan II's rule with an iron fist, the smaller Islamist movements, particularly the ones that were active at universities, were firmly controlled. Two of these were the above-mentioned *al-Adl wal Ihasne* and *al-Islamiya*. The second of these presented itself as having a conservative policy and negotiated with the Moroccan government to participate in the political process in the mid 1990s, leaving more militant activists to support *al-Adl wal Ihasne*, some of whose fighters also participated in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Chechnya, Bosnia and Kosovo (MEED Quarterly Report 1999). Although extremism could not really spread under the protection of political freedom, the deteriorating situation in Algeria had a ripple effect on neighbouring countries.

Alleged Algerian involvement in Morocco manifested itself on 24 August 1994 when gunmen shot dead two Spanish tourists – and injured a third as well as a Moroccan woman – in the Atlas-Asni hotel in Marrakesh, before making off with 10 000 dirhams (US\$1 130) in cash (Reuters 1994). The Moroccan authorities arrested two Algerian nationals, Redouane Hammadi and Stephane Ait Idir, as well as two Moroccans for their involvement in this attack. Before the attack, the four suspects were alleged to have received radical training in France from Abdelilah Ziyad, a Moroccan college teacher who had gone to Afghanistan in 1992 (Roy 2004:316). One of the Moroccans arrested was Hamel Marzouk (28), who was originally from Oran but who carried a French passport in the name of Abderrahmane Ouakka. Marzouk acknowledged his involvement in the 1993 attacks on McDonalds in Casablanca, a bank in Oujda and the Atlas-Asni hotel (Reuters 1994a). He also claimed that after Ziad had instructed him to attack a Casablanca synagogue he had instead decided to bomb a Jewish cemetery. Firearms were also found in his possession (Reuters 1994b).

After Algerians had been implicated in this attack, Algerians were required to obtain visas before entering Morocco. In retaliation, Algeria closed its border with Morocco, further straining relations between the two countries (Hughes 1994). On 16 June 1994 a military court in Rabat convicted two Algerians for gun-running. The two were arrested after they fired at a security roadblock in Fez (Hughes 1994a). In April 1998 an armed Islamist group killed ten Moroccans near the border town of Oujda (BBC Monitoring Middle East 1998).

In 1999 most of the Afghan veterans joined a splinter group of *al-Adl wal Ihasne*, headed by Sheikh Mohammed al-Bachiri. This group was believed to have been behind a number of smaller Islamist organisations, including one known as 'Promotion of Virtue and Prohibition of Vice', which was responsible for stoning a man to death on 27 February 2002 (*Daily Star* 2002).

Casablanca bombings

Concern that Morocco had become the latest battleground in the war on terrorism increased after synchronised suicide bombings in Casablanca killed 44 and injured many more. The attacks were a disturbing reminder of the strength of the underground Islamist movements in Morocco. They were a serious setback to the efforts of King Mohammed VI to integrate Islamist parties into mainstream politics. Prior to the Casablanca bombings, Morocco's own militant groups had not launched any significant attacks.

On 16 May 2003 five attacks, executed almost simultaneously throughout the coastal city of Casablanca, left 45 people dead – including the 12 suicide bombers – and 100 injured. Three Spaniards were killed and four Spaniards were injured inside the Casa de Espana restaurant, while 20 others, including a Spanish truck driver and two businessmen, died in the same blast, which was set off by powerful explosives in coordinated attacks. Two other bombings were at the Farah (Safir) hotel and the Israeli Alliance community centre, while the remaining two targets were an old Jewish cemetery and a Jewish-owned Italian restaurant next to the Belgian consulate (EFE News Service 2003).

The choice of targets suggested that the terrorists wanted to destroy symbols of Morocco's religious tolerance and modernity – restaurants where the elite of different religions gathered, Jewish targets, and the hotel, which had a popular nightclub. One might argue that the selection of targets – places unacceptable to the principles of extreme Islamists – was in line with the agenda of local extremists influenced by a transnational agenda and striving to impose an Islamic state on Morocco.

Except for the synchronised timing of the explosions, the Moroccan bombings could be described as relatively unsophisticated. They were Morocco's first suicide attacks. The killing and injury of so many local citizens came as a shock to ordinary Moroccans who, unlike Algerians, were not accustomed to acts of violence and terrorism. In the case of the Jewish cemetery, the blast apparently detonated prematurely, killing three squatters who were standing near a communal water spring outside the graveyard walls. Although a number of organisations were suspected of being implicated in the bombings, it became clear that the radical nature of the attacks had been influenced by the poor socio-economic conditions of Sidi Moumen and that the actual bombings had been carried out by a cell of people who knew one another. Most of those who were directly involved in the attack were killed in the operation.

***Groupe Islamique Combattant Marocain* or the Moroccan Islamic Combat Group**

In the aftermath of the Casablanca bombings, the security forces focused their attention on the *Groupe Islamique Combattant Marocain*, or the Moroccan Islamic Combat Group (GICM). The GICM was established in the late 1990s by Moroccans who had fought the former Soviet Union in Afghanistan (following a similar trend as the other countries under review). It was believed that the initial role of the GICM was to provide logistical support to *al-Qa'eda* operatives when they passed through Morocco. When the Moroccan government began to cooperate with the US on security-related issues after 9/11, the GICM decided to rethink its initial role (AFP 2004). The GICM was headed by Abdelkrim Thami Mejjati until he was killed in a shoot-out with security forces in Saudi Arabia in 2005.

Saad Houssaini, who was believed by the Moroccan Ministry of the Interior to be the head of the GICM's military wing, was arrested in March 2007. He had previously travelled to Afghanistan in 1997 and was implicated in the Casablanca attacks (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007ca). Prior to his latest arrest, he had been arrested on the Iraq-Syria border in 2006 and handed over to Morocco. He had also been implicated in a suicide attack on 11 March 2007, just before he was arrested in Morocco (Dow Jones International News 2007f). According to Moroccan security forces, Houssaini, the son of a university professor, studied chemistry in college and won a Moroccan government scholarship to the University of Valencia in Spain. Before completing his studies, he had moved to Afghanistan, where he received paramilitary training. Before leaving for Afghanistan, Houssaini was arrested by Spanish police for being in possession of false

travel documents and manuals on how to manufacture explosives. In Spain he had received radical training by an unnamed Tunisian (Whitlock 2007). In 2002 Houssaini returned to Morocco from Afghanistan and began reactivating GICM cells. The military committee was tasked with setting up camps in the Rif and Atlas mountains to train new recruits and to shelter members of groups to be located at bases to be used for bomb-making. After the Casablanca bombings in 2003, Houssaini worked on the establishment of a network to recruit Moroccan fighters for Iraq. According to the security forces, he had sent 18 recruits to Iraq using funds he obtained from the GICM (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007cb).

Hassan M, an associate of Houssaini, was arrested in Syria and deported to Morocco in 2006. He had previously lived in Spain, Turkey and Syria, and from Syria he had tried to enter Iraq. Houssaini's name was mentioned in police reports on a terrorist group whose members included Taieb Bentisi and Salaheddine Benyaiche, both accused of being members of the GICM. Abdelaziz Benzine, another Moroccan who had been trained in Afghanistan and who was described as a co-conspirator in the 2003 Casablanca bombings, serving alongside Houssaini, was arrested on the same day as the 11 March bombings (Whitlock 2007).

For his role alongside Houssaini in the GICM recruitment networks for Iraq, Abdelaziz Habbouch, alias Tarek, was arrested by Moroccan authorities on 28 May 2007. Described as one of the prominent members of the GICM who had received training in Afghanistan, Habbouch was also implicated in the 2003 Casablanca bombings. During his interrogation, Habbouch provided a list of Moroccans who had left for Iraq. One of these was Abderrahman, who had been captured by US forces in Baghdad. According to Habbouch, most of the recruits had come from Casablanca, Tetouan and Ouezzan. Habbouch also confirmed that Benzine had given money to the families of those who had left for Iraq. He also referred to Zayd, who had been the recruitment coordinator in Syria (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007cc). Zayd could be Izzeddine Nawayili, whose aliases were Abu Souhayb and Abu Zayd. Nawayili facilitated the attempted infiltration into Iraq of Ben Mousa in August 2005 (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2005c). The interrogation of Houssaini confirmed that Zayd was the contact person in Syria who would greet volunteers in Damascus and arrange their passage across the border into Iraq (Whitlock 2007).

On an international level, authorities in a number of European countries arrested suspected members of the GICM who had been linked to transnational acts of terrorism (see also Chapter 5). For example, on 19

December 2004 Spanish authorities arrested Hassan El Haski in the Canary Islands for his alleged links with the Madrid bombings. He was also believed to have been the person behind the murder of the Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh in Amsterdam (AFP 2004a).

On 29 August 2005, Belgian authorities in turn announced the arrest of 18 men suspected of belonging to the GICM. They included Khalid Bouloudo, Abdelkader Hakimi and Mourad Chabarou – all suspected of having links with those responsible for the May 2003 Casablanca attacks and the March 2004 train bombings in Madrid (AFP 2005a). In France eight people were convicted in July 2007 on a charge of providing logistical and financial support to the 2003 Casablanca suicide bombers. One of those convicted was Mustapha Baouchi, who was a contact of Nouredine Nafia, a member of the GICM who is serving a 20-year sentence in Morocco for the attacks (Von Derschau 2007). The GICM was influenced by extreme Islamic teachers, including Abu Qatada, the radical preacher whom the UK seeks to expel (Dow Jones International News 2005).

***Salafia Jihadia* or the Jihad for Pure Islam**

Salafia Jihadia or the Jihad for Pure Islam was established in 1992 by Mohamed Fisazi to oppose Arab states, including Morocco and Saudi Arabia, which joined the US-led coalition against Iraq in 1991 (Bouzerda 2002). *Salafia Jihadia* is a loose umbrella organisation made up of a cluster of independent cells.

One of *Salafia Jihadia's* predecessor groups, headed by Ahmed Raffiki, was active in the 1980s and 1990s in the recruitment of Moroccan fighters for Afghanistan, Chechnya, Bosnia and Kosovo (BBC Monitoring Newsfile 2003). Raffiki's successor, Abu Hafis, a follower of the philosophy of Osama bin Laden, is currently in custody.

On 28 March 2005 Moroccan security forces announced that they had dismantled a *Salafia Jihadia* network operating in various Moroccan towns, including Mohammadia, 20 km from Casablanca (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2005d). *Salafia Jihadia's* links with the GSPC in Algeria and with the conflict in Iraq will be discussed in a later chapter.

A small *Salafia Jihadia* splinter group, *as-Sirat al-Mustaqim* (the Good and Righteous Path) was described as 'fuelled by a hatred of Western values' (Richburg 2003). Its leader, Youssef Fikri, who was sentenced to death for

premeditated murder and who had been wanted since 2002, had been serving a prison sentence for drug smuggling under a false identity (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2006c). Other *as-Sirat al-Mustaqim* members sentenced in December 2006 by a court in Sale, Morocco, were (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007cd):

- Youssef Addad and Abdelmalek Bouisakarne – each sentenced to death for ‘premeditated murder, deliberately endangering people’s lives and their safety, forming a criminal gang to plan and carry out terrorist activities, forging money, theft, expropriation of money, possession of explosives, planning to endanger public order by means of violence and praising acts which form terrorist crimes’
- Mohamed Ait Bensaid – sentenced to 30 years in jail
- Tarek Farssi, Ibrahim Hamdi, Hassan Mendaoui and Mohamed Achdad – each sentenced to 15 years in jail

On 27 October 2007, Moroccan security forces arrested three suspected *Salafia Jihadia* members in Oujda near the Algerian-Moroccan border. One of the suspects was wanted in connection with the suicide bombings in Casablanca, one was a former soldier who had visited Afghanistan and the third was a 14-year-old (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007ce). Following these arrests, Oujda became a centre of police operations, with checkpoints being set up close to the town.

On 8 November 2007 Morocco opened a trial of 51 individuals, predominantly associated with *Salafia Jihadia*, suspected of involvement in the Casablanca suicide bombings. Members of this group had been arrested in Casablanca, El Gara, Sale, Kenitra and Agadir and included a woman identified as Hasna Moustaid (Dow Jones International News 2007g). Moroccan security sources reported that a group of *al-Qa’eda* recruiting agents had been operating in Zouerate, Mauritania, since December 2005 (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2006i).

Al-Takfir wal Hijra is another small extremist group believed to be linked to *as-Sirat al-Mustaqim* and *Salafia Jihadia*. Its leader, Zakaria Miludi, was believed to have been inspired by Mustafa Choukri, who set up a group with the same name in 1974 (Bouzerda 2002). Moroccan justice minister Mohamed Bouzoubaa claimed that the group had ties with foreign networks in Egypt and Afghanistan, including *al-Qa’eda*. The group first attracted attention when its members stoned Fuad Kardudi to death in February 2002

for drinking alcohol. Subsequently ten of its members were each sentenced to 20 years in jail for the crime. Although not an act of terrorism, these and other activities signalled a move from fundamentalism to extremism. On 15 December 2004 Moroccan police arrested six unidentified men between the ages of 23 and 48 at Layayda, near Rabat, on suspicion of membership of *al-Takfir wal Hijra* and charged them with holding subversive meetings, threatening people and using violence. Handwritten documents and religious books, some of them inciting violence, were seized at the time of the arrests (AFP 2004b).

Fitting more into the *al-Qa'eda* framework was a plot to attack Western shipping in the Straits of Gibraltar with a speedboat manned by suicide bombers. This plot was uncovered a year before the Casablanca bombings and led to the arrest of 30 people in May and June 2002. They included three Saudis and seven Moroccans believed to have links with *as-Sirat al-Mustaqim*, *Salafia Jihadia* and *Takfir wal Hijra*. One of the Saudis was Abu Zubair al-Hailal Mohamed al-Tbaiti, alias the Bear, who had served as a military commander in Afghanistan before joining the Arab *Mujahideen* in Bosnia as an artillery expert. While based in London, Zubair had been a recruiter for *al-Qa'eda* (Kohlmann 2004:29). The two other Saudis were Hilal Jaber Aouad al-Assiri and Abdullah M'Sfer Ali al-Ghamdi (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007cd). A number of those arrested had been in Afghanistan, fuelling speculation that Osama bin Laden's *al-Qa'eda* network was involved in some way (Bouzerda 2002).

Terrorist cells in Morocco

Cell structures

The basic unit of an underground organisation is the cell. Usually the size of the cell depends on its function as well as the perceived threat from opposing forces. It is therefore to be expected that the cell will become smaller in order to reduce infiltration. Compartmentalisation of the cell is also a common strategy to protect the cell and the larger organisation. Compartmentalisation also implies that information is restricted relating to the planned operation, but also personal information, including the identity of cell members (referred to by aliases). The degree of compartmentalisation broadly depends on the size of the organisation, the level of support from the population and the

level of threat from opposing security forces. Particularly when ordinary citizens support security forces, the broader underground organisation and cell structures will become smaller and more defensive for fear of surveillance and infiltration. In addition to cells with specific functions, cells are also geographically organised with units in various parts of the country operating autonomously. The geographical spread of cell structures also reduces the vulnerability of the larger organisation. When cells are centralised or concentrated in one area or section of the population they can be more easily infiltrated, leading to a clamp-down on the organisation. For security and capacity reasons, both of which are necessary for the survival of an organisation, the underground cells need to be diversified both geographically and across all levels of society. Cells with specific functions include:

- External command structures, which are predominantly responsible for overall direction, propaganda, financial assistance (with decentralisation, cell structures become more self sustainable) and provide limited operational assistance
- Support cells, which are predominantly responsible for identifying potential members and conducting background checks on these people or screening them before introducing them to existing members. Front organisations could also serve in this capacity. Because of their function, it is less important to compartmentalise support cells than it is to compartmentalise operational cells
- Operational cells are smaller (normally between three and eight members). With the development of decentralised cell structures driven by a common philosophy, operational cells became more independent. Local autonomy exists within the cells responsible for executing operations. Strategic assistance or guidance may come from individual(s) representing the broader aims of the operation. It is, however, essential to note that in addition to external role-players settling in a country (target country or country being used as a safe haven) these individuals need some sort of local support. The success of the operation will depend on the ability of its members to blend in. This is because these cells know more about local conditions and because they are in a better position to make decisions relating to the implementation and timing of an operation. Within operational cells tasks are also specific:

- Cells may be organised for a specific mission and be dissolved after completion of that mission (to move on to a new mission). Each member has specific responsibilities, for example, getting access to supplies, intelligence on the target, counter intelligence that focuses on security forces, constructing the device and delivery of the device
- Common and centralised training often unifies decentralised units. This has particularly enhanced the role of training camps in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Mali. Training to enhance cohesion can also be considered 'innocent' through activities such as camping, going to a firing range or play paintball
- Compartmentalisation and decentralisation serve to protect underground organisations and their cell structures against infiltration and discovery. As a result, cell structures are becoming increasingly independent, making it extremely difficult for security forces to identify, infiltrate or penetrate cell structures

Since the Casablanca bombings, the Moroccan authorities sporadically announced the dismantling of terrorism networks that threatened the country, as well as networks which recruited individuals to participate as foreign fighters in Iraq. It is important to acknowledge that the real threat of terrorism in Morocco has come in the form of small cell structures and not from large recognisable structures. Particularly when members of the cell are limited to the same family or group of friends, these structures are extremely difficult to monitor and eradicate. Although the destructive power might be less, due to limited access to resources and organisational skills, smaller cell structures can be equally destructive by creating a constant sense of insecurity and fear.

In addition to the threat from small independent cell structures, their existence serves another purpose, which is to measure public sentiment. In the absence of, or limited access to, better structured organisations – often because of government control over areas where people might meet – individuals who are being individually radicalised will not have access to better structured organisations, but they will form smaller independent cells which include people they react with that have similar viewpoints and sentiments.

In other words, the fact that Morocco is not confronted with the same level of instability is not an indication that individuals are not being radicalised. The existence of cells is an indication that domestic and international frustration

still exists. According to Judge Baltasar Garzon, one of Spain's leading anti-terrorism judges, Morocco is home to approximately 100 *al-Qa'eda*-linked cells that pose an imminent threat to Europe: 'Each cell has five to ten members – so we are talking about 900 to 1 000 people.' According to testimony, the majority of members of the cells in northern Morocco speak perfect Spanish and are able to slip easily in and out of Spain, a short distance across the Strait of Gibraltar (Dow Jones International News 2004b).

In July 2004 the security forces dismantled an 11-member terrorist cell in Agadir, southern Morocco, that was preparing to carry out acts of sabotage against undisclosed targets. This new Agadir cell was exposed on the basis of information gained from confessions by members of the Beni Mellal cell, which the security forces had previously dismantled. Preliminary information confirmed a link between the new Agadir cell and Ibrahim Hamdi, leader of the Beni Mellal cell, as well as members of an earlier Agadir cell who had been arrested in July 2003 (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2004g).

In June 2006 the security forces dismantled a group called *Jamaa al-Muslimoun al-Joudoud* or the Group of New Muslims, which was believed to be headed by Abu Issa, a UK resident. The trial of 42 alleged members of this group continued into 2007. The defendants were from Sale, Rabat, Casablanca, Berrechid, Oued Zem, Tangiers and Guelmim. The main accused, Abdelmajid Kabli, was charged with 'forming a criminal gang in order to prepare for and carry out terrorist acts; working in a non-recognised association; and organising public gatherings without authorisation' (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007cf).

In one of the biggest coup attempts, the security forces arrested 317 suspected members of the *Ansar al-Mahdi* group between August and December 2006. This group, which was established by Hassan el-Khattab, alias Abu Osama, was charged with setting up training camps in the Rif mountains, with several cells in Sale, Sidi Yehia El Gharb, Sidi Slimane, Al-Yousifiah and Casablanca, with the aim of establishing an Islamic government in Morocco (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007cg). Suspected targets included hotels, foreign missions and vital facilities in various coastal towns frequently visited by tourists (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2006d). El-Khattab was believed to have links with *Salafia Jihadia*, as well as with *al-Qa'eda* operatives in Europe and the GSPC.

Similar to the GSPC in Algeria, *Ansar al-Mahdi*, which is under the overall control of el-Khattab, is divided into northern, central, southern and eastern sectors, sub-divided into cells with an emir at the head of each cell. In August

2006 the second in command was Abu Jabir, the emir of the Casablanca cell (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2006e). El-Khattab was also believed to have appointed El Ouerdini as the emir responsible for the group's military wing. Under El Ouerdini's command, members of the group bought a piece of land in the Nador forest where they built a house, which was used as the headquarters of the military wing as well as a training base in preparation for attacks. In addition to a military training ground, the premises included a recording studio to be used in the production of propaganda material. The group financed its operations by forging banknotes (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2006f). For additional finance, El-Khattab opened stores in Sale and planned bank robberies (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2006e).

After investigations and interrogation only some 50 of the original 317 suspects were prosecuted. They included the wives of two Moroccan Air Force pilots, five soldiers, three paramilitary gendarmes and a policeman. The alleged leader of the military wing, El Ouerdini, a former military officer, denied all charges including the manufacturing of explosives and the forging of banknotes and official documents (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007ch).

Before the 2003 Casablanca attacks, fighters attached to the Rebaa cell in Meknes attacked the military barracks in Guercif, stealing Kalashnikovs (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2006g). Interior Minister Chakib Benmoussa noted in early December 2006 that *Ansar al-Mahdi* had been one of seven terrorist networks dismantled by the security forces. During these operations police questioned 320 people and charged 44 (AFP 2006a).

Several members of the security forces had been implicated, and the government initiated strategies to curb and limit radicalisation within the security forces. In an attempt to deprive *jihadists* of weapons training, compulsory military service was suspended (Black 2007a). In a strategy to further limit the possible influence of extremists, the General Directorate of Studies and Documentation (DGED), which is Morocco's secret service, arranged for religious scholars to visit military bases and barracks to instruct military personnel on tolerant Islam. A control and monitoring programme was also introduced, requiring soldiers to report anything suspicious to their commanding officers. Reacting on the seriousness of the matter, the General Directorate of the Royal Armed Forces asked for the dismissal of several army troops and non-commissioned officers who had shown signs of exaggerated religious behaviour (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007ci).

Broadening the suspected reach of *Ansar al-Mahdi*, Libyan security forces extradited two Moroccans, identified as Chami S and Aghlam A, who were

suspected to be linked to the ongoing *Ansar al-Mahdi* case in July 2007, to Morocco (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007cj). In July 2007 a court in Sale sentenced Rabi Ghanem, Rachid Souhali and Mohamed Koreaa to four years in prison for 'forming a criminal gang to plan and carry out terrorist acts as part of a collective plan aimed at seriously damaging public order; holding public meetings without prior permission; and belonging to an unauthorised association' (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007ck).

During the same period, the Interior Ministry announced that security forces had also dismantled *Jama'at al-Tawhid wal Jihad fil Maghrib* (Unification and Jihad), a cell suspected to have links to the GSPC, as well as members of the *Hizb Attahrir al-Islam* (Islamic Liberation Army). Members of the latter party were arrested for distributing compact disks as well as the internet addresses of *jihadi* organisations in poor areas in Casablanca, Agadir, Mohammedia, Settat, El Jadida and Tangiers (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2006h). Subsequently, 14 of its members were sentenced on 8 December 2006. Abdelhamid Jaafar and two others received four-year sentences and fines while the remaining 11 were sentenced to three years in jail (AFP 2006b).

In early February 2007, Moroccan security forces arrested an unknown number of unidentified members of a group believed to have been planning to target hotels and public places in Tangiers, including a Jewish neighbourhood and a supermarket chain in Marjane. The authorities announced that large quantities of firearms and explosives had been discovered in their possession (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007cl).

In another case, a court in Sale convicted members of the Nador cell on 25 July 2007 for 'forming a criminal gang to prepare for and carry out terrorist acts; holding public gatherings without authorisation; and activities in a non-authorised association'. Karim Mokhtari and Mohamed Oulichkihi received sentences of three years' imprisonment and Abdelkrim Bouchrou, Mohamed Abet, Mohamed Askyou, Mohamed El Aasraoui and Mimoun El Kakiri received two-year jail sentences (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007cm).

Followed by a case involving nine members of the Mesahel cell, which was implicated in an alleged plot to target the US Embassy in Rabat. A court on 2 March 2007 convicted Mohamed Ben El Hadi Mesahel, a Tunisian suspected of being the leader of the group, to 15 years' imprisonment (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007cn). Mesahel was alleged to have acted as a coordinator between Islamist groups in Algeria, Morocco and Libya. He was also implicated in the recruitment of Moroccans to join the armed resistance

in Iraq after taking them to Algeria with the assistance of illegal migration networks. Mesahel was also alleged to have lived in Italy, where he acted as coordinator between *al-Qa'eda* members in France, Italy and Syria planning operations including the bombing of the Milan metro, targeting the French intelligence headquarters in Paris and overseeing the operation of transporting fighters to Iraq through Syria. In January 2006 Mesahel was believed to have returned to Morocco and had contact with extremists in Casablanca and Sale who intended to participate in the insurgency in Iraq (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007co).

Mesahel's co-accused were sentenced as follows:

- Abdelghani Aouiech, ten years' imprisonment
- Adelfettah El Hidaoui, eight years
- Adelhak Touri, six years
- Lahcen Mhader, six years
- Adel Ghirar, six years
- Adel Fares, four years
- Mohamed Harmouch, two years (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007cp)

The group was arrested in March 2006 after the arrest of Anour Majrar, who told interrogators that he had visited GSPC leaders in Algeria with Mesahel and Amir Laaraj, an Algerian. Prosecutors also charged Mesahel and Majrar with being part of a terrorist network that was planning attacks on the Paris metro, Orly airport and the headquarters of the French intelligence agency, as well as Milan's police headquarters and the Basilica of San Petronio in Bologna (Smith 2007).

Ansar al-Islam

In addition to Moroccan organisations and small cell structures which have external alliances, *Ansar al-Islam*, based in the Middle East and Europe, was claimed to be spreading its influence to North Africa, and especially Morocco. Founded by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, *Ansar al-Islam* originally concentrated its operations in Iraq. In 2007 it posted a communiqué on the internet calling for the liberation of Al Andalus and the replacement of the monarchy in Morocco with an Islamic government (Cembrero 2007). Linked to Moroccan operations in Europe, particularly Spain (see also Chapter 5), the threat to liberate Al Andalus is of considerable concern to Moroccan authorities, particularly in Tetouan, close to Ceuta and Melilla. This topic will be returned to later in this chapter.

Suicide attacks in 2007

The impact of smaller independent cells was again confirmed in an attack on 11 March 2007 when Abdelfettah Raydi (23), a Moroccan, detonated his explosive vest in an internet café in Casablanca, killing himself and wounding three others. It appeared that the café was not Raydi's intended target as he detonated his device following a confrontation with the owner of the café after he could not get access to a particular website. His accomplice, Youssef Khoudri (26), dropped his suicide belt and ran away, but was later arrested and taken to hospital. Prior to the attack Raydi had been sentenced to five years' imprisonment in 2003 for his alleged involvement in the Casablanca attacks. He had, however, been pardoned in 2005. Both Raydi and Khoudri were unemployed and came from Douar Skouila, a poor neighbourhood in Casablanca. Raydi, the eldest of seven children, grew up without a father (Abdennebi 2007). According to articles reporting this event, the two were part of a group of five recruited in Hay Mohammedi, Casablanca. Other intended targets were Casablanca's police and paramilitary headquarters as well as restaurants and hotels (Ghanmi, 2007).

As a result of investigations, a number of suspected terrorists died or were killed in Casablanca during the course of 10 April. Mohamed Rachidi, alias Salah or Mustapha, who was identified as the first suspect, blew himself up in the early hours, while a second, Mohamed Mentala, alias Warda, was shot dead before he could detonate his explosive vest. In a second incident during the afternoon, an unnamed alleged terrorist barricaded himself into an apartment and detonated an explosive device, killing himself and wounding three policemen, one fatally, as well as a child. Rachidi and Mentala had also been implicated in the May 2003 bombings in Casablanca (AFP 2007h). In a third incident, five people were injured after a man had blown himself up in an apartment. Later in the evening a fourth suspect detonated his explosives, injuring five people including two policemen, as he blew himself up in the main road of the Hay al Farah district (AFP 2007i). Among those who killed themselves on this day was Ayyoub Raydi, the brother of Abdelfettah Raydi (BBC Monitoring Newsfile 2007a).

In the aftermath of the March and April attacks, Moroccan authorities arrested a number of other suspects. For example, on 21 March authorities announced that they had arrested 24 suspects, aged between 18 and 27 from Sidi Moumen, where one of the attacks had occurred, as well as Tangiers, Tetouan, Ouezzane and Chefchaouen. Twelve of the suspects were described as potential suicide bombers (AFP 2007g). The 24 were identified as Youssef Khoudri (the suicide bomber who had failed to blow himself up

on 11 March), Abderrahim Serri, Khaled Aref, Hamid El Gharbaoui, Hicham Ettouini, Youssef Ouaziz, Abderrahim Boudhrif, Zakaria Bouchama, Abdelhaq Hidri, Mohamed Essalhi, Mohamed Ettalbi, Mustapha Hidri, Youssef Boujiad, Mohamed Hamdaoui, Abdessamad Chardoudi, Hassan Ait El Baz, Abdellatif Aine, Abdellah Ennajm, Touhami Laanaya, Mourad Erraidhi, Abdallah Kricha, Ousama Ould Jomaa, Hicham Amlili, and a minor, Ala Eddine M (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007cq). On 29 March 2007 Hicham El Moumni, originally from Casablanca and described as the coordinator of the suicide bombers, was arrested in Dakhla while attempting to leave for Mauritania and Mali to join a GSPC/AQLIM training camp. He was claimed to have had links with Abdelfettah Raydi but left after the 11 March explosion.

On 14 April 2007 two brothers detonated their suicide vests in Casablanca. The bombers killed themselves near the US consulate in Casablanca and the American Language Centre in the Boulevard Moulay Youssef. The bombers were identified as Omar Maha (23), who had been one of the suspects in the March 2007 suicide bombings in Casablanca, and Mohamed Maha (32), previously unknown to the security forces (*Kuwait Times* 2007).

Moroccan Nationals linked to GSPC/AQLIM in Algeria

Although Algeria and Morocco do not have the best of relationships, they work together on security matters (particularly on a tactical level), while admitting that there is still much room for improvement in their cooperation. Algerian terrorist groups historically used Morocco as an important supply route. The following examples and court cases further emphasise the importance of cooperation between the two countries.

Moroccan relationships with the GSPC exist on two levels. One is regional or cross-border cooperation with extremist movements in Algeria, particularly in smuggling supplies through networks. The second is Moroccan participation in the GSPC international network, particularly in Europe. An example of Moroccan involvement in the GSPC in Europe manifested in the arrest and trial of Yassine Chekkouri, a Moroccan, who was found guilty on 2 February 2004 of collaborating with the Milan cell of the GSPC in recruiting and sending volunteers to Afghanistan, Algeria and Tunisia (AFP 2004c). Chapter 5 will continue this discussion.

The arrest of a French national, Robert Richard Antoine Pierre, alias Lahj, alias Abu Abderrahmane, alias Yakoub, in the aftermath of the 2003 Casablanca attacks, led to the identification of 16 members of *Al Oussuoud*

Khalidine (Timeless Lions), a *Salafia Jihadia* cell created by Pierre, who had previously received training in Afghanistan. Members of the cell fled to Spain via Ceuta. Eight members of the cell captured in Morocco confessed that Pierre had taught at a workshop on ‘mines, grenades, bombs and guerrilla tactics’ in woods near Tangiers known as Gueznaya. The cell members had also received psychological indoctrination and training in weapons handling and the preparation of explosives. Leading members of the cell were named as Brahim Hamdi, Abdeslam Dachraoui and Rachid Aharez, while other cell members were Meftah Abdelaziz, alias Moul Sossess, Lassiri Ismail Abu Houdeifa, Ayatm Mustafa Al Azkari, Abdelilah Hisnou, Abu Ali, Mohamed Maataoui, alias Souinaa, alias Chouaib, and Ahmed Baraka. Links had already been forged with the GSPC through Abdelaziz Benyaich, who was arrested in Algeria (Rodriguez 2003).

The following individual cases further reflect on the relationship between extremists in Morocco and Algeria:

- In July 2007 Moroccan security forces announced the arrest of 15 suspected *al-Qa'eda* members. According to security sources, the suspects came from Algeria, but planned to execute acts of terrorism in Morocco (Reuters 2007h)
- In September 2007 the court in Sale condemned 21 suspected terrorists who included Mohamed Reha and Mohamed Zemouri, two Belgians of Moroccan origin who were planning to set up ‘a terrorist cell in Morocco and preparing to send its members to Algeria to train in *jihad* and to join the GSPC/AQLIM’. The cell that had been dismantled in November 2006 was led by Reha and Khalid Azig, who had links with Brahim Benchekroun and Mouhamed Mazouz, former Guantanamo detainees who had been arrested in Afghanistan (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007cr). According to the security forces, Azig had studied theology in Syria and had made frequent trips between Syria and Turkey, while Reha, who had also travelled to Syria, had links to Islamist radicals in Europe (Reuters 2007i). Confirming the broader threat and impact, Reha told police that ‘not only were we preparing *jihad* operations in Morocco, but we were working to expand our *jihadist* movement to all the countries of the Maghreb with the help of our Algerian brothers from the GSPC’ (Guitta 2007). Reha, Zemouri and Azig were sentenced to ten years’ imprisonment after being found guilty of ‘forming a criminal gang to plan and commit terrorist acts as part of a collective plan aimed at seriously harming public order; and collecting and procuring money with the purpose of using it for terrorist acts’. The court sentenced two defendants, Hassan Alouan and Brahim

Bencheekroun, who had previously been detained in Guantanamo Bay, to ten years in prison. Four-year sentences were handed down against six defendants – Bouchta Boujema, Mohamed Benzouhair, Omar Mahdi Takhtaoui, Yassine Alioua, Ahmed Alilouch and Anouar El Jabri – after they had been found guilty of charges of ‘forming a criminal gang to plan and commit terrorist acts as part of a collective plan aimed at harming public order’. The court passed three-year sentences on Abderrahim Zajli, Ahmed Boukir and Yasser Al Otmani and two-year sentences on Mohamed Mazouz, a former Guantanamo detainee, and Driss Benlaakoul. Abdelkabar Chlieh was given a one-year term for being guilty of not informing the authorities. The court acquitted Hamid Daouiane, Farid Moussaid, Da Ali Ali and Ibrahim Draoui (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007cs). Of a total of 18 Moroccan who had been detained in Guantanamo Bay, ten had already been handed over to Morocco. Said El Boujaadia, Abdellatif Nassir and Younes Chagouri were among those waiting to be deported to Morocco, where they are likely to stand trial (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007ct)

- In August 2005, Moroccan authorities dismantled a cell linked with the *Salafia Jihadia*, arresting 30 people in Sale, Casablanca, Rabat, Fes and Tetouan suspected of having been in contact with the GSPC. Thirteen of the 30 were charged alongside six Moroccans handed over by Algeria who were alleged to have received paramilitary training in Algeria (Reuters 2005) and who were identified as Mustapha El Khayri, alias Abu El Oualid, Abdelouahab El Bahloudi, Abdelhak El Basrawi, Khaled El Marabiti, Abdelilah El Roudani and Mimoun Rahhou. They were suspected of having made contact with Tarek Charkaoui through the GSPC website run by Adel El Sakr, alias Abu Yaser El Sayyaf (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2005c). El Khayri, who was believed to be the leader of the cell, and the others were charged with ‘threatening public safety, theft, extortion, illegal possession of weapons, formation of a gang to prepare and commit terrorist acts and membership of an unauthorised association’ (AFP 2005b). Mohamed D, who was arrested in the suburbs of Dakhla in Western Sahara, had entered Western Sahara illegally from Mauritania. He admitted that he had received paramilitary training at a camp run by the GSPC in the Malian Sahara (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2006j). The six Moroccans handed over by Algeria were some of the 19 involved in this case who had entered Algeria secretly to join the GSPC for military training
- In another case, Anouar Mjerar, alias Anwar Mazrar, a Moroccan, was sentenced after being extradited from Greece in October 2005 (AFP

2007j). He received a seven-year jail sentence for trying to establish links with the GSPC and for preparing terrorist acts. He was arrested in Greece on 13 September 2005 after escaping from France. According to French intelligence, Mjerar was suspected of having set up a terrorist network. French intelligence had informed the Greek authorities that Mjerar would attempt to enter Greece from Turkey on a bus travelling from Istanbul to Thessalonika (BBC Monitoring Europe, 2007)

- On 2 February 2007 a court in Rabat sentenced 18 members of the GSPC to up to ten years' imprisonment. They were Mustapha Khayri, alias Abou El Oualid (ten years), Abdelouhab El Bahlouli and Abdelhak El Basraoui (eight years), Azeddine Nouali (six years), Khalid M'rabti, Abdelilah Redouani and Ali El Abdi (five years), Mohamed Benharrou and Lahcen Benmoussa (four years), Jaouad Aouam, Tarek Cherkaoui, Mustapha Zitouni, Hassan Bouiyi and Abdelmouin Sbai (three years), Kamal Belyamani and Mimoun Rahou (one year) and Abdelilah Roudani and Abdelaziz El Ouafi (a fine of 5 000 dirhams). Younes Zitouni was acquitted on all charges (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007cu)

A fuller picture of the role Algerian nationals were playing in the threat to security in the sub-region emerged when Moroccan security forces dismantled a network of 26 suspects in February 2007 (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007cv and cx). They included:

- Khaled T, the leader of the Tetouan, El Fnidiq and Wassan cell, also referred to as the Tetouan cell, which originally specialised in the recruitment of volunteers to Iraq. During interrogation, Khaled acknowledged that while in Syria he had discussed a strategy to establish a *jihadi* network in Morocco with Abdellatif B, a Moroccan. The primary objective of the network was to attack ships at anchor in the Strait of Gibraltar. Rachid Essoussi would carry out this mission after he had completed his training in Iraq in the manufacturing and use of explosives. Other members of the Tetouan cell were Ahmed Safri, a Swedish national of Moroccan origin, and Mohamed Nadir, who died while in custody. In addition to receiving ideological training from the GSPC, the cell was believed to have received financial and logistical support from this organisation as well as from the GICM (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007cw)
- Yassine A and Fouad H were sent to Algeria to receive training in the construction of car bombs. Their sponsor was Abdelali Meftah, a Moroccan living in Belgium

- Abdelmalek B, a Morocco, helped Yassine A and Fouad H to reach Algeria with the assistance of a smuggling network operating between Algeria and Morocco. Abdelmalek also provided assistance to Karim Ouled Akka, brother of Mohamed Ouled Akka, who was killed in the suicide blast in Leganes, Spain, after the Madrid bombings

Ceuta and Melilla

The autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla are of particular importance in the counter-insurgency programmes of both Morocco and Spain. Although under Spanish authority, the fact that the cities are situated in Morocco means that they are used for *jihadist* propaganda. The living conditions of the cities' Muslim quarters make it a fertile breeding ground for extremists.

It therefore came as no surprise when Spanish Interior Minister Alfredo Perez Rubalcaba announced at a Spanish–Algerian summit in December 2006 that a cell whose members included ten Spanish citizens and one Moroccan national had been dismantled (EFE News Service 2006). According to information, the cell was associated with the *Salafia Jihadia* and had the Darkawia mosque as its ideological centre. Its members included two brothers of Hamed Abderrahaman Ahmed, the so-called Spanish Taliban, who had spent two years in Guantanamo Bay but was freed early in 2008 after terrorism charges against him in Spain were withdrawn. The cell had allegedly planned to attack a military arsenal. During their search operations police found forged documents, a flak jacket and an air pistol as well as cash, computers and mobile phones (Reuters 2006).

Earlier, other areas around Ceuta had witnessed local acts of terrorism. Tetouan, for example, had been implicated in a few threats beyond Morocco:

- Jamal Ahmidan, a suspect in the bombings, who lived near the Hsida mosque in Tetouan, died in a suicide blast during a subsequent standoff with Spanish police in Madrid on 3 April 2004 (*Mail and Guardian* 2007a)
- Abdelmonaim el-A ani (22), a Tetouan labourer, detonated his vehicle loaded with explosives on 6 March 2006 outside a funeral tent in a village near Baqubah, Iraq, killing six people and injuring 27 (Whitlock 2007)
- Moncef bin Masaoud (21), a Tetouan student attending college in Tangiers and a close friend of Abdelmonaim el-Aani, died in another suicide attack in Baqubah, Iraq, in August 2006 (Whitlock 2007)

- Yones Achebbak (23) also left for Iraq in 2006 but his fate is unknown (Whitlock 2007)
- The Hsida mosque recruited two young residents for suicide bombings in Baqouba, Iraq, in October 2006 (*Mail and Guardian* 2007a)

Of several Iraqi recruitment networks in Morocco uncovered by the country's security forces, one, which was dismantled in May 2007, included 23 Moroccan members with links to other Moroccan nationals in Mauritania, Belgium and Syria. Khalid Azig, a Moroccan and the network's suspected leader, as well as Mohamed Reha and his uncle Mohamed Zemmouri, two Belgians of Moroccan origin, were among those arrested. Two former Guantanamo Bay detainees, Brahim Benchekroun and Mahomed Mazouz, were also believed to be part of this recruitment network (Dow Jones International News 2007h). Mohsen Khaibar, a Moroccan currently living in Syria, was named as a link between Iraqi recruitment networks in Morocco and Algeria. The role of the internet in the recruitment process was again confirmed when detainees indicated that they used the internet to communicate with Algerian and Moroccan nationals (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007cy).

The borders between Algeria and Morocco and between Algeria and Mali have always been areas of concern.

- After a raid in 1994, Saïd Hamaz was jailed in Casablanca for 15 years for arms trafficking between Morocco and Algeria (AFP 2001)
- In December 2005 Moroccan authorities arrested 11 suspects in Casablanca for allegedly belonging to a group active on the border between Algeria and Mali and with ties to the GSPC (AFP 2005c)
- Mohamed Saïd Idghiri, a Moroccan and the suspected cell leader, was arrested in Casablanca. According to police, he was trained at a secret Sahel-African Islamist paramilitary camp in the Sahel-Saharan region before returning to Morocco to organise attacks (AFP 2005c). Idghiri and 13 other suspects were believed to be linked to a group operating on the Algeria-Mali border (Reuters 2006a)
- Cross-border incursions continued during 2007. For example, in July Moroccan authorities expected that more than ten Algerians had managed to infiltrate from Algeria into Morocco (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007cz). The Misab mountains and the border region around Tlemcen saw an increase in activities during 2007. In addition to cross-border incursions,

eastern Morocco also witnessed the setting up of mobile training camps for individuals of different nationalities. By contrast with similar camps in southern Algeria and northern Mali, the mobile training camps in eastern Morocco were used for the training of smaller groups – often between seven and ten people (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007da)

The year 2007 also saw the first fatality of a Moroccan national aligned to GSPC/AQLIM in Algeria. Algerian security forces killed Mohamed Ridha Belhachemi in late July near Tizi Ouzou (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007db). One of six Moroccans known to have been based in Algeria, Belhachemi was one of three Moroccans filmed in a video released by AQLIM. The other two were identified as Mohamed Bakkali and Mohamed Agbalou. Others wanted for their alleged association with a terrorist network active in the region were Bilal Hamam, Aziz Chakouani, alias Youssef, and Abdelali Chairi, alias Bechir (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007dc).

Organised crime and the financing of terrorism

Moroccan authorities released a 110-page report at a counter-terrorism summit in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in February 2005. Drafted by Morocco's Territorial Surveillance Directorate (DST), a counter-espionage and political police agency, and the Moroccan National Judicial Police, the report noted that Islamist terrorist organisations have branched out into other criminal activities as a means of financing their operations. It suggested that much of the money used to finance the 11 March attacks in Madrid had come from drug trafficking. 'The savage and bloody acts [of 11 March] were financed by drug trafficking endorsed by a *fatwa* from within the terrorist organisation responsible for the attacks,' the report stated, noting that the *fatwa*, or Islamic edict, 'provided religious legality for the use of criminal acts, such as drug trafficking, to finance the perpetration of any action aimed at destroying the infidel enemy'.

In stressing the growing relationship between Islamist terrorism and organised crime, the Moroccan authorities also pointed to incidents other than the 11 March attacks and the Casablanca bombings in May 2003. The report also listed terrorist plots that the police have discovered and managed to prevent, among them attacks against foreign interests, including embassies, hotels and fast-food restaurants, churches and synagogues. Nonetheless, the report argued that Moroccan security forces have managed to 'dismantle the most important' terrorist networks in the country, arresting more than 2 000 people for terrorism-related crimes (Cembrero 2005).

Conclusion

Despite reference to terror networks, the real threat of terrorism presents itself in small and independent cells, often involving members of the same family and almost always individuals with previous prison records for their involvement in dismantled terror networks or in other crime, especially narcotics-related offences. In understanding the current and potential threat of terrorism to the region, it is essential to focus on the radicalisation process as experienced in Morocco. As mentioned previously, the success of terror organisations is determined by their ability to adapt to changing circumstances and to use specific circumstances for their own advantage. Morocco's vulnerability is increased by:

- Poor socio-economic conditions concentrated in particular areas. While it is important to emphasise that not all the people in dire circumstances will turn to terrorism, previous examples have proved that poor socio-economic conditions influence a person's susceptibility to be radicalised. Conditions such as unemployment, illiteracy and slums further contribute to hopelessness and isolation
- Conviction of individuals for relatively short prison terms on the slightest suspicion of having been involved in terrorism-related activities. Radicalisation while being imprisoned has proved to be an area of concern. It was estimated in December 2006 that approximately 370 individuals were currently in prison in Morocco for terrorism-related offences. A further 260 had been pardoned in the previous few years (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2006k)

With the alignment of the GSPC with *al-Qa'eda*, an ideological framework was created to further justify violence and to train extremists in the region. The internet and individual radicalisation have been of great concern. Morocco's experience makes it clear that one does not need to have coordinated organisations in order to threaten the state and its population. How to counter this threat is another challenge that will be discussed in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 4

TERRORISM IN TUNISIA

Tunisia gained its independence from France in 1956. As in the case of Morocco and Algeria, the origin of Islamist groups can be traced back to domestic and international circumstances during the 1960s and 1970s. In the following discussion, the primary role-players will be briefly presented, as will the similarities and differences in the conditions contributing to these developments. In the same way as Morocco and Algeria, Tunisia faced socio-economic challenges while its government faced a growing legitimacy crisis.

During the 1970s, Tunisia began to experience economic difficulties, resulting in high unemployment, particularly of the youth. A growing gap between the younger and older generations followed this increasing unemployment and the student unrests of 1971 and 1972. Universities joined mosques as breeding grounds for Islamists. During the 1970s the government also allowed schools and factories to build their own mosques on their premises thus enabling Islamists to increase their influence on the youth. While the Algerian bread riots of October 1988 and the earlier riots in Morocco in 1965 had served as landmark events, Tunisia's own economic crisis culminated in its own bread riots in 1984 (Hermassi 1995:107).

Hizb al-Tahrir al-Islami, or the Islamic Liberation Party (ILP) – which was founded in Jerusalem in 1948 and which aimed at the establishment of an Islamic state and the restoration of the Caliphate – had a branch in Tunisia. The government became aware of its activities and prosecuted 29 members in a military court in August 1983 for 'establishing a clandestine organisation with a political objective'. Nineteen of the 29 were army officers, making this the first trial involving military personnel since 1962 (Shahin 1997:81-82).

Harakat al-Ittihad al-Islami, or the Islamic Tendency Movement (MTI), was influenced by a search for an ideological alternative of the state and became a strong breeding ground for Islamism, particularly after the Tunisian government had, in the same way as Algeria, incorporated secular ideological principles. Rashid al-Ghannoushi, the MTI leader who had been

influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria and by Salafism when he was at university in Damascus, was convinced that social reform based on the true principles of Islam was the only option for his country. Reflecting a similar frustration to one that had led to the Arabisation process in Algeria, Ghannoushi made the following observation when he returned to Tunisia: 'I remember we used to feel like strangers in our own country. After having been educated as Muslims and Arabs, we found our own country totally moulded in the French cultural identity' (Shahin 1997:69-70). Still apolitical, Ghannoushi joined Abdel Fattah Mourou in giving lectures at secondary schools and mosques based on three issues:

- Promoting Islamic principles, such as studying the *Qur'an*, *Sunna* and other religious texts
- Explaining the differences between Islamic principles and those considered to be un-Islamic, including Western democracy and Marxism
- Demonstrating differences between what is practised and what is preached

During this stage, the government generally tolerated Islamic movements, which were not considered a threat. Leftist elements were then regarded as the primary threat, with Islamist movements counterbalancing the left, particularly in mosques, schools and universities. In its early days, the MTI focused on moral issues and was considered as a 'religious association with reformist tendencies' (Shahin 1997:71). With the government presenting itself as favouring Islamic principles, the MTI was free to broaden its support base. The MTI was well structured and included:

- *Usar maftuha*, or open cells, at the base, with an average of five members each. These open cells acted as study groups, tasked with discussing religious, political and economic issues. From them, committed members could be selected for integration into closed cells
- *Usar multazima*, or committed or closed cells. These were clustered around 18 regional councils. Each regional council was headed by an *amil* or governor, who in turn was appointed by the MTI's emir. The *amil's* own organisational apparatus was responsible for the religious and political grouping of members in the open and closed cells
- In 1987 the militant core of the MTI, headed by Al-Jibali, was estimated as having between 4 000 and 6 000 members (Shahin 1997:90-91;94)

- *Al-Maktab al-Siyasi*, or the political bureau, was responsible for issuing public statements and liaising with other political actors

In the aftermath of the Iranian revolution, the Tunisian government began to question the motives of the Islamist movements, and this often led to open confrontation. Becoming defensive, the Tunisian government then tried to project the state as the guardian of Islam. Former Interior Minister Driss Guiga stated in 1981:

We are six million Tunisian Muslims. We are all the Islamic Tendency. No one can accept that certain individuals claim the monopoly of Islam and pretend to act under its name or its sacred values in order to hide their political goals (Shahin 1997:84).

During its conference in May 1981, the MTI decided to continue with its double strategy. Keeping its clandestine base, it also worked to achieve broader recognition by forming alliances with other political role-players (Mahmoud 1996:250). At the same time, President Bourguiba began to experience difficulties, particularly because of the lack of well-defined economic and social policies. The government introduced authoritarian policies, moving towards a domination of power and control, while Islamists saw an opportunity to take control. Opting for a political non-violent approach, the MTI asked for recognition as a political party. The government reacted in July 1981 by arresting 60 members, including the MTI leadership, charging them with forming an illegal organisation, defaming the president and publishing false news reports (Shahin 1997:87).

In the mid 1980s Tunisia had a favourable climate for the growth of extremism. As well as poor socio-economic conditions and in particular a high unemployment rate, the government was weak and disorganised and open to direct challenges. These led it to ban radical fundamentalist groups, and this action in turn led to feelings of marginalisation. After decades of relative prosperity, the Tunisian economy was in crisis in the early 1980s. Revenue from oil was halved in 1986 due to the fall in world prices. Income from tourism dropped by 11 per cent after the Israeli raid on the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) headquarters in Tunis. And the substantial income flow from Tunisians working in Libya was cut after Colonel Gadaffi expelled 40 000 Tunisian workers in 1985. Also, following the drought of 1986, food imports doubled (*The Times* 1987).

From 1985 to 1987, the Tunisian government, particularly under Interior Minister Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, cracked down more severely on opposition

groups, adding to the growing political crisis. Helping to justify harsher counter-measures were events including:

- The arrest in France of a group that included seven Tunisians suspected of planning bombings in Paris in March 1987 (Shahin 1997:97;99). Possible links with Iran were suggested, playing into the hands of the Tunisian government in its campaign against the MTI
- In July 1987 violent demonstrations organised by the MTI left eight policemen and a demonstrator injured. Approximately 200 young people carrying MTI banners threw petrol bombs and stones. A police car was burnt out before riot police managed to restore order (MacDonald 1987)
- On 2 August 1987 bombs exploded injuring 13 people at Hana Beach, Hannibal Palace, Le Kuriat and Sahara Beach in Sousse and Monastir. The Tunisian government implicated the Iranian government (Middle East Economist Digest 1987). Notwithstanding these claims, a group calling itself *Jihad Islamique*, or Islamic Jihad, claimed responsibility for the attack (Ghiles 1987)

In the aftermath of these developments, the MTI was implicated in a plot to overthrow the Tunisian government and replace it with a new government based on the Iranian model. Subsequently, in August 1987, 99 MTI members were charged with 'forming an illegal organisation; plotting subversive actions with Iran; and attempting to overthrow the government'. Five of the seven members sentenced to death were Hamadi Jebali, Ali Laaridhi and Salah Karkar, accused of organising the violent street protests in July; Fethi Maatoug, accused of planting bombs in a hotel on 2 August; and Abdelmajid Mili, charged with direct involvement in the blasts. Another 69 received sentences ranging from two years to life imprisonment. These sentences had international repercussions. For example, in Beirut on 28 September 1987, Islamic Jihad, a pro-Iranian Lebanese group which was holding Western hostages, threatened to kill Tunisian government officials if the death sentences were carried out (*The Globe and Mail* 1987).

On 7 November 1987, the retired General Ben Ali, who by then had become Prime Minister Ben Ali, replaced President Bourguiba as the head of state due to medical reasons. In an attempted reconciliation with moderate Islamists, President Ben Ali introduced measures including:

- The reinstatement and reaffirmation of Islam as the country's religion

- The adoption of a more conciliatory attitude towards what for the first time was considered moderate Islamism
- Strict legal measures against all types of subversive activity in the name of Islam (Hermassi 1995:109-110)

On the political level the following concessions were made:

- A general amnesty for MTI members then imprisoned
- The inclusion of the MTI and its secretary-general, Sheikh Abdelfattah Mourou, in the High Islamic Council, a consultative body created by the government to deal with religious matters (Reuters 1988)
- The inclusion of the MTI in the the National Pact, which brought together all political parties to draft rules of political participation
- The participation of Islamists in the elections of 2 April 1989 as independents
- The legalisation of an Islamist student organisation
- The legalisation of the publication *al-Fajr*, an Islamist newspaper (this legalisation was, however, withdrawn in January 1991)

The MTI expressed its willingness to adhere to the new party law of 1988 which prohibited the formation of political parties on the basis of religion, region or language and changed its name to *Harakat an-Nahda* or the Renaissance Movement (Wright 1988). In essence, *an-Nahda* hoped to introduce *Shari'a* law through participating in the electoral process, in the same way as other organisations, such as the FIS, had done in Algeria. Other ideals included 'distributing the wealth of the country, transparency, modernising Islam, and rebuilding an Islamic identity and civilisation in Tunisia and the world'.

In the elections of April 1989, *an-Nahda* candidates attracted tremendous support for the party's ideals, gaining a position as the opposition (Carroll 2007). Although *an-Nahda's* application to be a political party had been turned down, its candidates stood as independents and won 15 per cent of the total vote, with up to 40 per cent in major cities including Tunis. However, instead of being admitted to parliament the *an-Nahda* independents were arrested on suspicion of attempting to overthrow the government.

Subsequently, the government introduced harsher measures against Islamists, including banning Middle Eastern Islamic clothing, changing the curriculum of Islamic subjects, closing mosques after prayer and controlling mosques with government-appointed imams (Shahin 1997:100-101). For example, on 16 November 1987, 76 people including middle-ranking police, army and customs officers were arrested in connection with a plot to assassinate members of the government. According to Interior Minister Habib Ammar, the suspects obtained arms from Mohamed Chammam, a leader of the MTI. Chammam was sentenced in absentia to 20 years in jail at a mass trial in September. Sayed Ferjani, a Tunis video-club owner who had been among those arrested, was believed to have assisted two MTI leaders also sentenced to flee the country. According to security forces, tear gas bombs were bought from France with money from Habib Mokni, a prominent MTI leader living in exile in Paris (Dick 1987).

During the government crackdown:

- On 16 April 1988 Fatah Deputy Commander Khalil al-Wazir, alias Abu Jihad, was assassinated in Tunis (the PLO in Tunisia had previously been targeted in October 1985) (Dick 1988)
- On 17 February 1991 the office of the *Rassemblement Constitutionnel Democratique* in Bab Souika was attacked and one guard was killed
- On 21 May 1991 a court in Tunis sentenced eight of the accused in the *Rassemblement Constitutionnel Democratique* attack to life imprisonment and 19 others to between two and 20 years in jail (Reuters 1991)
- In May 1991 the interior ministry announced the discovery of a plot initiated by *an-Nahda* to overthrow the government. Subsequently 300 suspects were arrested, including some 100 senior military officers. According to prosecutors, the officers had met in the region of Hammamet, 60 km south of Tunis, on 6 January to plot their coup. Among other targets, they planned to seize the defence and interior ministries, take over radio and television stations and take over the security force barracks around the capital before occupying the presidential palace (Reuters 1991a)
- In August 1992 a plot to assassinate President Ben Ali by a suicide attack was uncovered. There was a later indication that the plot had a transnational dimension after Italian police intercepted a letter written in 1993 while he was in custody by Mondher Ben Mohsen Baazaoui, alias Hamza the Tunisian. Baazaoui, a member of *an-Nahda* and also a

Bosnian *Mujahideen*, had written to Imam Mohamed Saidani in Bologna, who in turn knew Anwar Shaaban of the European Shura council and Osama bin Laden (Kohlmann 2004:76)

In summary, while *an-Nahda* presented itself as a non-violent political party, it was implicated in clashes with security forces, sporadic violence against government institutions and plotting the violent overthrow of the government and replacing it with an Islamic state. While neighbouring Algeria was experiencing similar but more extensive activities, it was to be expected that Tunisia feared a similar path. In reaction, President Ben Ali declared *an-Nahda* illegal and jailed its leaders and many of its adherents. Although they had attracted support, the Tunisian Islamists, in contrast to their counterparts in Algeria, had underestimated the strength of the country's government and overestimated their own strength.

Subsequently, a proactive anti-terrorist policy effectively safeguarded Tunisia from Islamist extremism until 2002. However, in spite of a rigid anti-terrorism campaign a number of Tunisians along with other North Africans became involved in transnational terrorism. Some examples:

- The identification of Fakhit, a Tunisian, as the mastermind of the Madrid train bombings
- Tarek Maaroufi, a Tunisian headed the GSPC's network in Belgium.
- In Afghanistan the assassination of General Ahmad Shah Mas'ud, an anti-Taliban Afghan leader, was the responsibility of two Tunisian suicide bombers – former residents of Belgium who had disguised themselves as journalists in order to interview Mas'ud. When they finally did, they detonated their booby-trapped camera

However, apart from the Tunisian involvement in Algeria, the majority of suspects involved in transnational terrorism used European countries as a base.

One of 12 Tunisians captured in Afghanistan and Pakistan was Nisar Sassi (28), who had been handed over by the US in 2004 and was subsequently arrested in France. According to Abdallah al-Hajji, who was handed over to Tunisian authorities by the US in 2006, Sassi had worked in a fabric store in Pakistan since 1990. Pakistani authorities had arrested Al-Hajji in 2003 and had turned him over to the US. Back in Tunisia, Al-Hajji was being prosecuted for his suspected affiliation with the Tunisian Islamic Front (FIT). Earlier, in 1995, a Tunisian court had tried Al-Hajji in absentia and sentenced

him to 15 years' imprisonment for joining a terrorist organisation in Pakistan (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007dd). The involvement of Tunisian nationals in Iraq will be discussed in a later chapter.

On 11 April 2002, a Tunisian, Nisar Naouar (24), alias Nisar Seif Eddin al-Tunisi, drove a truck loaded with cooking gas cylinders into the El Ghriba synagogue in Djerba, the oldest in Africa, killing 16, including 11 Germans, one Frenchman and three Tunisians, and injuring a further 26 Germans. The Islamic Army for the Liberation of the Holy Sites claimed responsibility. This group was allegedly connected to *al-Qa'eda* and claimed responsibility for the attack in letters to Arabic newspapers in London. Authorities in Tunisia and France arrested relatives and friends of Naouar after the attack, including Belgacem Naouar, his uncle, who was later prosecuted and convicted in Tunisia. Two accomplices, a Polish convert to Islam and a Moroccan, were arrested in Paris (Henley 2002). The attack was also linked to Germany through a telephone call Naouar had made an hour before the explosion to Christian G. According to German authorities, Christian G was a Polish-born German living in Duisburg, Germany (*Financial Times* 2002).

The Tunisian Combatant Group, founded in 2000 by Tarek Maaroufi and Saifallah Ben Hassine, is linked to *al-Qa'eda* and other extremist groups in Europe. Some of its associates are suspected of plotting to attack the US, Algerian and Tunisian embassies in Rome in December 2001. The group functions mainly as a recruiter for Muslim fighters and a false document facility. Maaroufi himself was arrested and charged by Belgian authorities with providing assistance to the assassins of Ahmad Shah Mas'ud, an Afghan rebel leader and ally of the US, by giving them stolen passports and fake visas (AFP 2002a).

The Zarzis group is named after the town Zarzis in southern Tunisia close to the Libyan border, from where members of the group originated. In April 2004, a Tunis court sentenced six suspects, mainly high school and university students and identified as Hamza Mahroug, Abdelghaffar Guisa, Aymen Mcharek, Omar Rachedun, Omar Farouk Chalendi, and a teacher, Ridha Haj Brahim, to jail terms totalling 19 years and three months for their roles in a defused terror plot. The group's suspected leader, Tahar Guemair, who was believed to be in Sweden, and another suspect, Ayoub Sfaxi, said to be living in France, received sentence in absentia totalling 26 years and three months.

Under questioning, members of the group, also known as the Prophet Brigades, acknowledged having prepared attacks in and around Zarzis. One attack was planned to target a port security official using a rocket launcher. The group also used the internet to get access to instructions on how to construct explosive

devices. According to Tunisian officials, several accomplices left Tunisia in 2002 to establish links with *al-Qa'eda* (Dow Jones International News 2004a). A week after the previous trial, the Tunis court sentenced Abderrazak Bourguiba (18) to 25 months in prison for terrorist activities (Ben Bouazza 2004). Three months later the appeal court reduced the longer jail sentences to 13 years as the state had failed to show evidence of the materials and equipment used to prepare explosives. However, the men confessed to having planned the attack (Reuters 2004a). In February 2006 the Tunisian government released members of the Zarzis group as part of a mass pardon to mark the 50th anniversary of the country's independence from France (AP 2006).

Tunisian Nationals linked to GSPC/AQLIM in Algeria

The GSPC operated in the Tebessa region along the Tunisian border, an area also used to train Tunisian extremists. On the Tunisian side of the border, the Kasserine region proved to be a centre of activities that included attacks, as well as cross-border smuggling networks involving both Algerians and Tunisians. During 2001 it was estimated that approximately 200 Tunisian extremists linked to the Ennahda group led by Rached El Ghannouchi, in exile in London, had been trained by GSPC members in the region (AFP 2001a).

The border area with Tunisia had remained active since the start of the conflict in Algeria. For example, on 25 October 2001 a group of terrorists suspected of being associated with the GSPC attacked a border post near Oum Ali in the Kasserine region close to the Algerian border. Three soldiers were killed when two explosive devices were detonated. While only Algerians had been implicated in previous attacks, this attack indicated the involvement of Tunisians as two of the bombs that were defused had been constructed with gas bottles from Tunisia (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2001). Again on 28 October 2001, three Tunisian soldiers were killed and several others were injured when their truck hit a home-made bomb at Oum Ali (AFP 2001a). The Kasserine region again attracted attention in early November 2002 when Tunisian security forces seized 200 kg of explosives and ammunition. As part of a weapons trafficking network active between Algeria and Tunisia, seven people were arrested but three managed to get away including two Algerians. This Algerian-Tunisian network was previously implicated in the trafficking of red mercury and the printing of counterfeit banknotes (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2002).

However, security cooperation between Algeria and Tunisia is well established. Cooperation was initiated in 1991 when the Tunisian authorities allowed Algerian special forces to search for Emir Djaffer al-Afghani's GIA group inside

Tunisia (Emir Djaffer al-Afghani was later killed in March 1994 in Bouzerea). The cooperation was still in place when Abderezak El Para's group attacked a Tunisian border post, killing two Tunisian soldiers, in May 2000. Algeria was interested in the GSPC's Tunisian connections, as was confirmed in the matter involving Busto Arsisio, when four Tunisian logistics experts claimed to be working on behalf of the GSPC were arrested in 2002. Algeria in turn did not stand in the way of Tunisia when in 2001 it expelled the FIT's Zaid Bachir, who had tried to join the GSPC in the east of Algeria (BBC Monitoring Middle East, 2005e).

A number of Tunisians were killed or arrested in Algeria on suspicion of attempting to join the GSPC. For example, in November 2001 Algerian security forces killed seven armed extremists, two of them Tunisians and one Mauritanian, in the Zbarbar Mountains near Bouira, 120 km southeast of Algiers (AFP 2001a). In another example, Algerian security forces arrested six Tunisians in Annaba in March 2005 for attempting to join the GSPC. The Tunisian government suspected that the six may have been part of a regional *al-Qa'eda* network planning attacks on Western targets in Tunisia. The eldest was 28 and had already received training in the Meftah Mountains. The discovery of homemade explosive devices further supported the suspicion that those arrested were preparing a large-scale attack against Western interests in Tunis or other Tunisian resorts. The security forces also found satellite images accessed through Google Earth of both the British High Commission and the US embassy, as well as the names of diplomats representing both countries (AFP 2007l).

Islamist extremism in Tunisia proved to be better organised than the Tunisian agencies suspected (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2005e). Algerian security forces also claimed on 25 April 2005 to have arrested 24 terrorist suspects, among them four Tunisians, en route to a meeting with GSPC militants close to Algiers (De Bendern 2005). In August 2005 five Tunisians were arrested after they had received paramilitary training in the Ain Barbar region and were about to rejoin one of the small GSPC groups active in the Edough Mountains (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2005f).

In October 2006 the Tunisian authorities also charged Hichem Essadi, a medical student, on suspicion of belonging to the GSPC and attempting to participate in the insurgency in Iraq. Essadi had already been serving three years' imprisonment for attempting to join the insurgency in Iraq before he was freed in terms of the February 2006 amnesty (Reuters 2006b).

Jumping to 2007, in January, Zied Ghodhbane, a Tunisian, was sentenced to 11 years' imprisonment in Tunisia after he had been arrested in Algeria in May 2005. The court also sentenced two other unidentified Tunisians to two

years in prison in the same case. One was convicted on a charge of financing Ghodhbane's trip to Algeria and the other for attempting to join a terrorist organisation (AP 2007f).

During 2007, after the alignment of the GSPC with *al-Qa'eda*, the involvement of Tunisians again received attention. In March 2007, for example, 14 Tunisians aged between 20 and 25 were convicted in Tunisia for having links with the GSPC in Algeria. Seven had been arrested in Algeria before being handed over to Tunisian authorities in April 2005, while the others were accused of planning to travel to Algeria to prepare for *jihad* in Iraq. Among them were Ghaith Ghazouani, Mahar Bezyouch and Mohammed Amine Aoun, each of whom was sentenced to ten years in prison (AFP 2007k).

In April 2007 a further five Tunisians, including Mohamed Moncef Baghdadi, a computer expert, were convicted in two separate cases. In the first, Baghdadi was found guilty of raising funds to send new recruits to the GSPC. In the second, he was convicted for training in explosives – skills he planned to use in Iraq. Baghdadi received sentences totalling 26 years' imprisonment. In the first case an additional two suspects were sentenced to ten years' imprisonment each, while another person was sentenced to 16 years' imprisonment in the second case (Dow Jones International News 2007i). A fifth accused, Mehdi Mabrouk, a student, was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment for planning to join the insurgency in Iraq (AP 2005g).

On 1 August 2007 six foreigners – three Tunisians, two Libyans and one Moroccan – were killed in a large-scale security operation in the Bir El-Ater Mountain in the province of Tebessa. It was officially estimated that some 70 terrorists were operational in the Bir El-Ater region (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007de). Several attacks were also directed against members of the security forces in the Tebessa area. For example, on 17 March 2007 a homemade explosive device in Tebessa seriously injured an officer of the ANP. The incident occurred during a search operation in the mountainous Doukhane chain, in Djebel Anwel (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007df).

Algeria and Tunisia have strengthened their joint border surveillance, using electronic sensors and drones. This heightened security aims to improve the monitoring of the covert terrorist withdrawals across both sides of the border.

In addition to the involvement of Tunisians in Algeria, Tunisian security officials uncovered Algerian involvements in threats to its security on 23 December 2006 and 3 January 2007. The first incident was near the forested area of Solimane at Hammam-Lif, 25 km south of Tunis. In an exchange of gunfire

between Tunisian security officials and a group of extremists, one soldier, one policeman and 14 of the suspects were killed and a further 15 suspects were arrested (Reuters 2007). Six of the group were believed to have come from Algeria. The head of the group, Lassaad Sassi, a former Tunisian policeman, was killed. Originally from Bir el-Bey, near Hammam-Lif, Sassi had apparently spent time in Afghanistan and Italy where he headed a cell in Milan before travelling to Algeria. The Milan cell was believed to be providing military clothing and money to the GSPC and financing and planning suicide bomb attacks in Italy. According to Tunisian security forces, Sassi and five other men – four Tunisians and one Mauritanian – had crossed the border from Algeria to organise a terrorist cell in Tunisia (Smith 2007). They had established a training camp in mountains in Djebel Ressass and Boukornine, south of the capital.

In a follow-up engagement on 3 January 2007 Lassaad Sassi's deputy, Bacha, was killed in Solimane, a small town near Nabeul, 40 km south of Tunis (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007dg). The terrorists had apparently planned to split into two groups, targeting Hammam-Chott in the southern suburb of Tunis, and Grombalia on the road to Cap Bon (*Maghreb Confidential* 2007).

In November 2007 charges including plotting an attack against the security of the state, attempted aggression aimed at overturning the regime and inciting the population to kill one another were brought against 30 suspected Islamist extremists, reportedly belonging to a group called *Soldiers of Assan Ibn Al Fourat*, the name of its leader, who had been involved in clashes with security forces in December and January. The suspects had been arrested after police had launched an attack against the group in the town of Soliman, 40 km south of the capital. Zouhair Jridi was charged with failing to provide information to security forces about planned acts of terrorism and an attack on Ain Tbornok, more than 30 km outside Tunis (AP 2007i).

On an Islamist website, the *Youth of Tawhid and Jihad* in Tunisia declared a *jihad* on President Ben Ali, accusing him of harming Muslims in general and Muslim women in particular – a reference to a recent campaign against the wearing of head scarves (AP 2007(h) and BBC Monitoring Middle East, 2007dh). Tunisia and other Muslim countries striving to enhance women rights have been confronted by extremist organisations that consider these practices 'un-Islamic'. In countering any additional threat, Tunisian authorities decided to ban all Algerian males under 30 years of age from entering the country (Guitta 2007).

On 18 February 2007, 14 Tunisians were tried on charges of joining a terrorist organisation and receiving military training outside Tunisia. Although a few

denied these accusations, a number of the accused admitted to have travelled to Algeria in order to receive military training ahead of joining the resistance in Iraq. Seven of the accused had been arrested in Algeria two years previously and had been handed over to Tunisia (BBC Monitoring Middle East, 2007di).

Conclusion

Tunisia's domestic and international circumstances were similar to those of Algeria and Morocco. However, until President Ben Ali took over in November 1987, Tunisia's political development was remarkably different from that of the other two countries in this North African region. Although the MTI in Tunisia could be described as one of the more developed parties in the region – in addition to the FIS in Algeria – subsequent developments influenced a different outcome.

President Ben Ali's dual strategy was to address both the current and the potential threats. In addition to arresting those implicated in terrorism, his government embarked on a programme to address the country's socio-economic needs.

Its closed political scenario has had the greatest influence on developments in Tunisia. Whereas in Morocco the prime factor for the increase in unrest has been socio-economic, in Tunisia the inability of the younger generation to participate in the country's political life has been the main concern. The growth of radicalisation, especially among university students, has often been on an individual basis rather than through underground organisations. The involvement of Tunisians in transnational terrorism operations in Europe, Iraq and Algeria also manifest an apparent inability and lack in support to direct its operations to Tunisia.

CHAPTER 5

NORTH AFRICAN INVOLVEMENT IN TRANSNATIONAL TERROR NETWORKS

Counter-terrorism strategies during the 1990s in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia assisted the spread and development of transnational terrorism networks in Europe. Political exclusion, mass arrests and convictions forced those involved or suspected of being involved in political opposition or acts of violence and terrorism to leave for countries where they would have more freedom to continue their activities (protected under the guise of political asylum). From these safe havens a number of individuals directed operations against their countries of origin.

At the same time, the absence of effective counter-terrorism strategies in much of Europe further assisted the spread of terrorism. Initial freedom to recruit and disseminate information had enabled members of the FIS, AIS, GIA, GSPC and GICM to establish support networks in Europe. Initially settling in France for language reasons, the GIA began a two-pronged strategy of facilitating acts of terrorism in Algeria and committing violent acts on French soil. As France's own counter-terrorism strategies improved, the networks spread to other European countries. As will be seen in this chapter, these networks also facilitated training in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya and, later, participation in the insurgency in Iraq.

While Afghanistan war veterans had exercised a great influence on domestic campaigns in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, Bosnian terrorists contributed predominantly to the spread of networks and subsequent operations in European countries. Europe was no longer considered as only a facilitation network. It became a battleground, fuelled by the resentment of North African immigrant communities.

Unlike the people involved in the 9/11 attacks on the US, who were mostly Saudis and Egyptians, most of the attacks in Europe have been carried out by North African groups such as the GIA, GSPC, GICM and allied groups in Libya and Tunisia. *Al-Qa'eda*, as mentioned earlier, made use of these established networks, particularly those of the GIA/GSPC, through common ideology, training and operations, to enhance its own operations in Europe.

It is therefore essential to place recent developments in Europe in a historical context. In countries with the most developed systems of political asylum and basic human rights and civil liberties, it was relatively easy for groups such as the GIA/GSPC from Algeria, the GICM from Morocco and others from the Middle East to set up structures to support campaigns in their countries of origin. Networks that had previously concentrated on propaganda and fund-raising transformed themselves into networks for recruitment and for facilitating the transnationalisation of what had previously been domestic terrorism.

While a detailed discussion of the importance of Europe to the development of transnational terrorism and the role of North Africa is beyond the scope of this chapter, some salient points should be noted.

The establishment of immigrant communities in Europe provided a safe haven for individuals coming from their respective countries of origin. The question of integration and associated isolation enhanced a sense of brotherhood of these communities. The close proximity of Europe and liberal immigration laws made entry to these countries relatively easy. Activities such as the illegal narcotics trade and the forging of official documents, in which some members of the immigrant communities often participated, made it relatively easy to merge organised crime and terrorism. As with France, networks were established in Italy, Germany, the UK and other countries for the procurement of weaponry destined for Algeria.

A sophisticated forgery cell in Rouiba, Algeria, led by an unnamed businessman from Bordj Menaiel, had some 20 members and specialised in the production of fake seals and stamps, residence documents, visas and passports. Active between 2000 and 2006, this cell also organised the escape of members of the GIA/GSPC members from Algeria to Spain. The cell's network extended to Algiers, Boumerdes and Tizi Ouzou. Among the items seized by the authorities in February 2006 were fake seals from the air and border police, the Algerian customs service and Algerian consulates in Spain (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2006l).

Prior to the events of 9/11, some European security agencies were believed to have turned a blind eye to these support networks as the perception existed that they did not present a domestic threat. This perception dramatically changed after 9/11 and especially after the Madrid and London bombings when it became clear that terrorist networks and some members of immigrant communities had changed their focus to include attacks in their host countries.

European countries also realised that in addition to the involvement of individuals wanted in other countries who had made use of political asylum, or of other illegal networks, a number of individuals involved in attacks such as the London bombings had had no previous connection with extremism or criminal activities but had been second and third generation immigrants, who had been radicalised by established extremists often wanted in other countries.

Three generations of *al-Qa'eda* supporters were thus discernable – newly radicalised established immigrants representing the third generation, those trained in *al-Qa'eda* training camps representing the second generation, and those who had participated in the war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan as well as the war in Bosnia representing the first generation.

Unemployment, racial intolerance and a growing perception that the war against terrorism was a war against Islam made it relatively easy for already radicalised individuals from countries such as Algeria, as well as individuals linked with the Afghan *Mujahideen* and Bosnian fighters, to recruit willing followers. For example, Mohamed el Maghrebi, an Algerian who had settled in Paris, played an important role in the radicalisation of Willy Brigitte, a French national who had received training under *Lashkar-e-Taiba* in Pakistan. Brigitte was later arrested on suspicion of coordinating a plot to attack Australia's energy network (Australian Broadcasting Committee, 2004).

It should be noted, as established in earlier chapters, that activities particularly in Europe, were not limited to individuals representing similar nationalities. Instead transnational networks were well established and interacted with other networks across borders. In addition, European support cells became specialised, at least to a certain extent. For example, a cell in France run by Karim Bourti made use of a network of fake brand-named clothing for fundraising (Pecastaing 2004:156), while Bourti also sent recruits to *al-Qa'eda* camps via London to Afghanistan. A second example, was the cell in Spain which specialised in forging documents and passports (Schanzer 2002). Also, the six members of the GSPC arrested in Italy in June 2003 included Tunisian as well as Moroccan nationals. The depth of the GSPC's network in Europe had already become apparent when in April 2000 police broke up cells in Italy and France that were believed to be planning to bomb a French market.

These networks were predominantly influenced by Afghanistan and Bosnian *Mujahideen*. Nationals from the three countries under review continued their involvement in the conflicts in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya as well as the second wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The particular influence of the Bosnian *Mujahideen* will be apparent throughout this monograph. For

example, Abu el-Ma'ali, alias Abdelkader Mokhtari, as well as former GIA commanders Abu Muhajir al-Djazairi and Abu Sabir al-Djazairi, established an Algerian cell in Bosnia, while Al-Hajj Boudella, an Algerian combat instructor, transferred from the Al-Sadda training camp in Afghanistan to Bosnia in 1992 (Kohlmann 2004:20;62).

Fuelling perceptions of a coordinated strategy in Europe, Spanish court documents referred to the fact that Moroccan, Libyan and Tunisian terror groups had met in February 2002 in Istanbul, Turkey, under the auspices of Abu Musab al Zarqawi, the Jordanian radical who led *al-Qa'eda* in Iraq, to plot how to bring holy war to Europe (Johnson et al 2005). This development spelled serious consequences for European security forces.

The involvement of Algerian, Moroccan and Tunisian nationals in transnational acts of terrorism were however not limited to Europe: Among many examples of the involvement of Algerian, Moroccan and Tunisian nationals in networks in Europe was the 3 July 2005 killing in Riyadh by Saudi security forces of the country's most wanted man, the *al-Qa'eda* leader in Saudi Arabia, Younis Mohammad Ibrahim al-Hayyari, who was originally from Morocco and who was also suspected of being involved in attacks in Riyadh carried out four days before the Casablanca suicide bombings. Two Moroccans were also accused of planning to hijack an aircraft in order to crash into a building in Jeddah (AFP 2004k). Other examples that will be discussed in this chapter include Lebanon and Iraq.

The following country-by-country discussion summarises the involvement of Algerian, Moroccan and Tunisian nationals in terrorism networks in Europe and the Middle East.

Lebanon

In September 2004 a GSPC cell was implicated in the recruitment for foreign fighters for Iraq near Tripoli, Lebanon, and the Ayn al-Hilwah Palestinian refugee camp, also in Lebanon. Lebanon served as an important part of the network for Algerian fighters. According to *Algeria News*, in July 2007 Syrians and a Lebanese living in Beirut were in charge of the reception of volunteer *jihadists* (Algeria Events 2007). These new recruits received training in combat and explosives before being sent to Iraq or Algeria.

Tunisian and Algerian nationals were also involved in *Fatah al-Islam* in Lebanon. On 20 May 2007, the Tunisians listed below, who were among a

group of 59 individuals which also included Syrian, Saudi Arabian, Yemeni, Egyptian and Palestinian nationals, were charged with a number of terrorist and related offences.

The Tunisians involved were:

- Al-Bashir Bin Muhammad al-Tayyib al-Arimani (22), alias Abu-Khubayb
- Ahmad Bin Ammar Bin Uthman Shawwat (21), alias Abu Asim al-Tunisi
- Al-Azhar Bin Bashir Bin Ibrahim Ghawfah (21), alias Abu-Ramzi al-Tunisi
- Ali Bin al-Mabruk Bin Sa'd al-Jari (21), alias Abu-Ramzi al-Tunisi
- Ali Bin Ammar al-Mahdi Bin Muhammad Buqadimah (19), alias Abu-Muhannad al-Tunisi
- Adil Abd-al-Sadiq Bin Muhammad al-Rahmani (32), alias Abu-al-Basir al-Tunisi
- Mahmud Bin al-Bashir Bin Abdallah Shawwat (25), alias Abu-al-Shayma al-Tunisi
- Muhammad Bin Ammar Bin Ali al-Jari (21), alias Abu-Abd-al-Haq al-Tunisi
- Abd-al-Razzaq Bin Ma'tuq Bin Misbah al-Tuwway (21), alias Abu-Ubaydah al-Tunisi
- Fathi Bin Nasr Bin Husayn al-'Asadi (25), alias Abu-al-Fida al-Tunisi

Algerians in the group included:

- Faysal Isma'il al-Uqlah (26), alias Abu-Shu'ayb al-Jaza'iri. Although born in Algeria, he carried a forged Syrian identity card in the name of Basim Hasan Muhammad Kilani and a forged Palestinian identity card in the name of Basim Bassam Ya'cub. According to Lebanese security forces, he was in charge of the *Shari'a* committee of *Fatah al-Islam*
- Nasr al-Din Bin Abdo Belqaem (21), alias Abu-Yasir al-Jaza'iri. Although born in Algeria, he carried a forged Syrian identity card in the name of Muhammad Ali Abbud

- Izz al-Din Bin Abd-al-Qadir Bin Musa (32), alias Abu-Mu'taz al-Jaza'iri. Although born in Algeria, he carried a forged Syrian census card in the name of Sami Ahmad Baydun

A month later, on 20 June 2007, Syrian security forces in Lebanon announced that they had arrested 40 Algerians who were attempting to join *Fatah al-Islam* (BBC Monitoring Newsfile 2007b).

France

France was the first choice for Algerian, Moroccan and Tunisian immigrants, as well as Islamists fleeing prosecution in their countries of origin. As already indicated, a common language was one of the primary reasons. As a result of attacks directed at French residents of Algeria (referred to in Chapter 2), French security forces began to crack down on GIA networks in France.

In addition to its network to support its operations in Algeria, Gunaratna (2002:162-163) confirmed that *al-Qa'eda* had infiltrated the FIS and the GIA in the early 1990s with the aim of demonising France among Algerians living in France. Subsequently, in addition to targeting French and other Western residents in Algeria, the GIA was able to mount several attacks against France in 1995 and 1996. Three examples of detonations in Paris were:

- An explosive device detonated in July 1995 at the Saint-Michel metro station near the Notre Dame cathedral, which killed eight people and injured a further 150
- A nail bomb in August 1995, which injured 17 people
- A car bomb in December 1996, which killed four people

Confirming the involvement of Algerian nationals, French police arrested ten suspects, including Boualem Bensaid (28), an Algerian student, in Lille in November 1995. Bensaid appeared to have acted as a go-between for terrorist cells operating in France and the GIA. Investigators revealed that the GIA recruited potential terrorists in suburban slums in France populated by North African immigrants, many of them unemployed. Confiscated material included documents, computers and accounting statements that shed light on how the terrorist network received logistical and financial support from outside France (Drozdiak 2005).

Khaled Kelkal, who held Algerian and French citizenship and who was directly linked through his fingerprints on an unexploded device, ran an information bureau in contact with Human Concern International, based in Stockholm and Zagreb which served as a staging point for the GIA's transnational operations. Kelkal, who was trained in Afghanistan, was also involved in an international Arab-Afghan network. He was killed in a shootout with French police in October 1995. A firearm found in his possession had been used earlier to kill Sheikh Abdelbaki Sahraoui, a co-founder of the FIS. Kelkal was believed to be a member of a group which travelled across Europe to hunt down Algerian dissidents in exile who were against the use of violence in Algeria (Kohlmann 2004:142).

Ahmed Ressay, an Algerian and a member of the GIA, worked with the Roubaix cell as well as *al-Qa'eda* on another Paris metro bombing, this time in 1996 at Port Royal, killing and injuring 91 people. Ressay was also implicated and prosecuted for his involvement in the 2000 plot to blow up Los Angeles international airport (the millennium plot) (Williams 2002:123). Two members of this cell, Boualem Bensaid, the mastermind of the Saint-Michel attack, and Smain Ait Ali Belkacem, the group's bomb expert, were sentenced to life imprisonment in 2002.

Earlier, in September 1999, French prosecutors had convicted 21 other members of the Roubaix cell, including Bensaid, Belkacem and Karim Koussa to six to ten years' imprisonment (Gunaratna 2002:164). Rachid Ramda, who operated from the UK, was extradited to France in 2005 where he was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment before further charges were brought against him in 2007 for his involvement in at least three bombings, including the 1995 attack on the Saint-Michel metro, for which he had been the financier. Prosecutors also suspected Ramda of handling the group's propaganda through his contacts with GIA cell members in Lille, Lyon and Paris (Von Derschau 2007a). Koussa, who was implicated in a number of GIA terror plots, had received training in Afghanistan and Pakistan (Kohlmann 2004:143).

The Roubaix cell was linked to the GIA as well as to *al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya* (Egypt) and the *Mujahideen* in Bosnia, particularly Abu el-Ma'ali and Fateh Kamel. After a shootout with French police, the apartment that served as a Roubaix hideout blew up, killing Rachid Souindi and Said el-Laihar, two Moroccans, and Teli bel Hachen, an Algerian. However, Lionel Dumont and Mouloud Boughelane, who were leaders of the cell, escaped (Kohlmann 2004:195).

Although German authorities had primary jurisdiction over the Strasbourg plot, which involved the Frankfurt cell, French authorities conducted

their own investigations and convicted the following individuals (Vidino 2006:165):

- Slimane Khalfaoui, alias Meliani, an Algerian linked to Mohammed Bensakhria, who had been wanted by authorities since 1996, who was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment
- Yacine Aknounche, an Algerian trained in Pakistan and Afghanistan with the assistance of Abu Doha, was arrested in September 2000 and sentenced to eight years' imprisonment although he denied any involvement in the Strasbourg plot

Following several successful prosecutions of the GIA in France its members established cells in Spain, Germany, Italy, Belgium and Switzerland. As Ambassador Ramtane Lamaara told a US House subcommittee hearing on Africa in the aftermath of the bombings in France: 'The international dimensions of the Algerian terrorist groups became proven facts, as cells with links to Iran, Afghanistan and Bosnia were identified or dismantled in France, Italy, Belgium, Spain, Germany and the UK' (Lama 1998).

After 9/11, the involvement of Algerian nationals in transnational terrorism was better recorded. French authorities in particular arrested and convicted a large number of Algerians for their involvement in the GIA. For example, on 30 November 2001, 19 GIA supporters were convicted in Paris for channelling arms and false identity documents to terrorists in Algeria (Ganley 2001). One of them, Laurent Mourad, a member of the London Algerian network, had travelled to Paris in 2001 where he reported his passport stolen on five separate occasions, being issued with new passports on each occasion and handing on his old passports to other GIA members including Said Arif (Vidino 2006:173).

A more recent example was the extradition of Said Arif from Syria to France. Arif, alias Slimane Chabani, alias Abderrahmane, who was born in Oran, Algeria, deserted from the army and spent time in *al-Qa'eda* training camps in Afghanistan. According to French officials, he was one of the closest lieutenants of al-Zarqawi, the Jordanian-born terrorist behind beheadings and a number of bombings in Iraq. Arif also had close relations with the Algerian cell based in Frankfurt, Germany, which had been involved in the Strasbourg plot. He escaped capture on that occasion and reached the Caucasus, specifically Georgia, where he collaborated with *al-Qa'eda* and veterans of Afghan camps. He was later arrested in France for his involvement in the ricin plot. The network was dismantled in December 2002 with the arrest of nine suspects in the Paris suburbs of La Courneuve and Romainville (Dow

Jones International News 2004c). This cell, which was led by Merouane Benahmed, an emir of the GIA, specialised in making bombs with electronic detonators. Benahmed was trained in *al-Qa'eda* training camps in Afghanistan and Chechnya.

On 16 December 2002 French police raided an apartment in Romainville, Paris and arrested three Algerians and one Moroccan who were members of the La Corneuve cell. Canisters containing cyanide and butane were found, as well as a protective suit, used when in contact with chemical and biological weapons, propaganda material, fake identity and travel documents, instructions on the production of cyanide and other toxic materials and videos on the *jihad* in Chechnya. One of men arrested was Menad Benchellali, who had received chemical as well as military training in Afghanistan and Chechnya and who was known as an *al-Qa'eda* recruiter. Another was Belmehel Beddaïdj, who confirmed the connection with the La Corneuve cell, which planned to attack Russian targets, more details of which became known after the arrest in January 2005 of Maamar Ouazane and two other Algerians. According to Ouazane, the cells planned to attack the Russian Embassy in Paris, the Eiffel Tower, a large department store and a police station (Vidino 2006:176-177;179).

At Trappes in September 2005, four men were arrested and charged with targeting the metro at Orly airport outside Paris. They included the cell leader, Safe Bourada, a French citizen of Algerian origin (Reuters 2007k).

In June 2006 a French court convicted 25 Islamist militants of planning terror attacks in Paris and of recruiting fighters to send to Chechnya and Afghanistan. Four ringleaders, who were either Algerians or of Algerian descent, received jail sentences of between nine and ten years. Khaled Ouldali, identified as one of the suspects, was a former member of FIS who had travelled to Chechnya twice and fought under the command of Ibn ul-Khattab. Most of the Algerians who participated in the conflict in Chechnya belonged to the London network headed by Abu Doha (Vidino 2006:174).

The United Kingdom

The UK has been an attractive haven for extremists, even before 9/11. As already indicated, Rachid Ramda, the financier of the 1995 Paris metro attacks, had operated from the UK before being extradited to France in 2005. In addition to financing terrorism, Ramda had been actively involved in publishing *Al Ansar*, the GIA's official newsletter. Further Nadir Remli, the former head of the GIA cell in London, was linked to Abu-Qatadah al-Falastini

(a radical Palestinian-Jordanian cleric who stayed in the UK since the early 1990s after claiming political asylum), while Abu-Hamza al-Misri used the network in London to distribute *Al Ansar* and other GIA publications (Vidino 2006:138).

The alleged head of the GIA group in London, Nadir Remli (47), and Mohamed Dnidni, who was believed to have been one of the main GIA officials in Great Britain for five years, had been under investigation in France and Britain since 1994 when Dr Benali Sitayeb, a Briton of Algerian origin, Dr Abderhamane Bihi, an Algerian, and three other Algerians, Rachid Messaoudi, Abdesallam Bandaoud and Rachid Elgerbouzi, were interrogated for their suspected involvement in the GIA in London (Reuters 1994c).

Despite a warning from Algeria, Remli had been given British citizenship after being classified as a political refugee in 1991, having lived in Britain since 1983 and being married to an Irish woman. He had subsequently been one of the founders of the Algerian Community in Great Britain (ACB), an NGO that acted as an extension of the FIS in Great Britain. During 1996, Remli continued to hand out copies of *at-Tabsirah* or 'The Enlightenment', an FIS newsletter, outside the Regent's Park mosque (*The Independent* 1996). In addition to distributing the newspaper, the GIA under the leadership of Remli in London sold video material that included footage of the murders of police and government officials. This was probably one of the first examples of video material being sold to fund acts of terrorism in Algeria (AFP 1996). In June 1999, Remli and Kanerdine Kherbane confirmed that the GIA and *El-Baqoun ala el ahd*, or Faithful to the Pledge, had merged in 1998, using the offices of the ACB as a cover for their activities (All Africa 1999). On 24 February 2005, Italian security forces arrested Remli at a Rome airport in the company of his son. Wanted since 1992 by the Algerian authorities, Remli was accused of supplying money to GIA groups in Algeria since 1992 by setting up a bank account at an Arab bank in London. They were both on an Algerian list of terrorists close to the *al-Qa'eda* network that was sent to Interpol and the UN (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2005i).

It was, however, Rashid Bukhalfa, alias Abu Doha, alias the Doctor, who played an instrumental role in the GSPC's transformation from a local armed group to an international terrorist organisation. In charge of GSPC fund-raising in London, Abu Doha, who had reached the rank of emir of an Afghanistan training camp, was also responsible for recruiting fighters for Afghanistan, Chechnya and Bosnia (Hafez 2007:204). By the end of the 1990s he had extended his focus from Algeria to *al-Qa'eda*'s broader objectives. He was, for example, in contact with al-Zarqawi and Ahmed Ressam (Joscelyn 2005).

He moved to the UK in 1999, where he helped to recruit GSPC members from the large communities of disenfranchised Algerian youth in European cities. From the beginning, Abu Doha cooperated with Seifallah Ben Hassine, a Tunisian who also lived in London, who had also been an emir of a training camp in Afghanistan and who had recruited Tunisians to fight in Algeria (Vidino 2006:143;147) .

The Finsbury Park mosque played a central role in the activities of the London network. The Algerian Afghans who had sought refuge in London were looked after by the ACB, part of the Human Concern International network, an Islamist NGO that had been blacklisted by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation. Allegedly, individuals associated with the Algerian Refugee Council, with links to the Finsbury Park mosque, also assisted in the settling in of Algerian extremists in the UK. In March 2003, Dr Mohammed Sekkoum, the chairman of the Council however revealed that a substantial number of active 'terrorists' have slipped into the country with their families, seeking asylum. When he informed the British immigration service about them, the authorities told him that it had nothing to do with him (*BBC News* 2003). The Algerian network used the Finsbury Park mosque as its unofficial headquarters, with radicals using the mosque's basement in the mid 1990s for planning attacks, forging documents and firearms training. During this period Abu Doha began to establish the network with the assistance of Abu Hamza and the religious teachings of Abu Qatadah. The mosque was also used to show video material and to distribute the literature of various militant groups. Despite warnings from North African and Middle Eastern countries, these activities were largely ignored by the British authorities. While in London in 1996, Yacine Aknouche, one of the militants sentenced for his involvement in the Strasbourg plot, had been radicalised by Abu Qatadah's sermons at the Finsbury Park mosque before being recruited by Abu Doha to go to Afghanistan. Imad Kanuni, a French-Moroccan detained in Guantanamo Bay, had spent time at the Finsbury Park mosque after returning from training camps in Afghanistan (Vidino 2006:187;189;190;191).

Further assisting Abu Doha to coordinate cells across Europe were Rabah Kadre, Tarek Maaroufi, a Tunisian living in Brussels, and Mohammed Bensakhria. Maaroufi and Bensakhria helped Doha to create a large support network in Europe that provided recruits with money, accommodation and forged documents. After being arrested on 26 December 2000 after raids on *al-Qa'eda* cells in Milan and Frankfurt, Mohammed Bensakhria, alias Muhammad Ben Aissa, alias Meliani, an Algerian who headed *al-Qa'eda*'s Frankfurt cell, gave evidence of the use of GSPC members by *al-Qa'eda* (Gunaratna 2002:173-174). Kadre, also implicated in the Strasbourg plot, was

arrested in Britain where he was charged as the mastermind in the cyanide plot against London's underground. Abu Doha himself was arrested at Heathrow airport, London, in 2000 when trying to leave for Saudi Arabia on a false passport. While in British custody, Doha had extradition proceedings brought against him by the US for the millennium plot, by Italy for the plot to attack the US embassy in Rome, and by France and Germany for the Strasbourg plot (Vidino 2006:157-158).

After 9/11, British security forces took official notice of activities they had previously disregarded. In April 2003, in the first case linked to *al-Qa'eda* in Britain, Baghdad Meziane and Brahim Benmerzouga, two Algerians, were each jailed for 11 years after being found guilty of financing terrorism (Reuters 2007). Two years later, in April 2005, Kamel Bourgass (32), alias Nadir Habra, another Algerian and suspected *al-Qa'eda* member, was convicted of plotting to launch ricin and other chemical and bomb attacks on London, as well as for the murder of Detective Stephen Oake after Bourgass's Manchester flat was raided in Manchester in 2004. Bourgass, who was sentenced to 22 years for this murder, had spent time in Afghanistan training camps (Winter 2007). In the same trial as Bourgass, another Algerian, Mouhoud Sihali, was acquitted but was re-arrested after the July 2005 bombings in London. He was then the subject of an extradition application by Algeria (AFP 2007m).

After Spanish authorities had claimed that there were a number of links between the bombers and militant figures based in Britain, London Police Commissioner Sir John Stevens confirmed that a definite link had been established between the Madrid bombers and *al-Qa'eda* sympathisers sheltering in Britain. While it had previously been thought that the British connection was restricted to financial and logistical help, the Spanish claims included an allegation that the clerics at the Finsbury Park mosque had played a pivotal role in controlling the bombers. In the months after the bombings, several links with London emerged. Jamal Zougam (30), a Moroccan detained in Madrid and accused of direct involvement in making the 13 bombs placed on commuter trains, allegedly travelled to London on several occasions for logistical help and to obtain forged documents for the *al-Qa'eda* cell in Spain.

Zougam and many of the other 18 suspects detained in Madrid, as well as the seven dead, were either members of or were closely associated with the GICM network in the UK. Abu Qatadah, previously referred to as one of the spiritual leaders of the Finsbury Park mosque, was described by Spanish authorities as *al-Qa'eda's* spiritual adviser in Europe, whose followers formed the command structure of *al-Qa'eda* in Spain. Until his release in 2005, he

was held at Belmarsh prison in southeast London under emergency terror legislation (Owen 2004).

Mohammed al-Guerbouzi (40), alias Abu Aissa El Meghribi, who was born in Laraich, Morocco, was one of the first to be implicated in the London bombings of 7 and 21 July 2005. Notwithstanding Morocco's earlier attempts in 2003 and 2004 to extradite Guerbouzi, the UK had not been able to assist as no extradition treaty between the two countries had yet been finalised (AFP 2005d). Although circumstances changed dramatically after the London bombings, the UK was still not prepared to grant unqualified deportation. Instead, it insisted (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2005h) that:

- Deportees should not be subjected to torture
- Deportees should not be sentenced to death
- The Moroccan government should guarantee that deportees would be given a fair trial

If the Moroccan authorities accepted the British conditions, the signing of the memorandum was due to have taken place in 2006.

Guerbouzi had been sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment in absentia by a court in Rabat on 19 December 2003 for his alleged involvement in the Casablanca bombings. Evidence presented to a Moroccan court claimed that he had helped the Casablanca bombers to obtain false passports and money. A report by the Moroccan attorney-general's office following its international arrest warrant claimed that Guerbouzi had been involved in the following activities (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2005g):

- He was in charge of studying the social, political and economic situation in Morocco, and of collecting money for the GICM
- He was providing forged documents, including passports, for members of the GICM
- He had relations with the Libyan counterpart of the GICM, and in addition to being a part of the *jihad* in Morocco he had travelled to Spain with Nouredine Nafia to recruit new members
- He was appointed deputy emir and consultant for the CIGM in June 2001 and also head of the committee charged with collecting resources for the

group. He and the other members of the group were instructed by Abu-Mus'ab on the start of an Islamic revolution in Morocco and on how to avoid the Moroccan authorities

- His last meeting with Osama bin Ladin and Ayman al-Zawahiri had been in Kandahar, Afghanistan, where he was given bin Ladin's blessing and assurance that all logistical and financial means must be made available for the achievement of his mission
- A British resident for 16 years, Guerbouzi was also accused of having links with prominent terrorists (The Press Trust of India Limited 2005), including Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the Finsbury Park mosque's Abu Qatada who was one of the detainees released from Belmarsh prison in March 2005, and Jamal Zougham who was alleged to have called landline and mobile telephone numbers in London belonging to Gerbouzi

The British Home Office revealed in 2004 that eight of the ten people then detained under the Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001, which is monitored by the Special Immigration Appeals Commission, were Algerians (Steele 2004):

- 'A' (37) came to Britain in 1989 to study and later took part in a marriage of convenience. He had claimed asylum but disappeared before his claim was rejected. He was alleged to have used credit card fraud to support North African terrorists
- 'B' (33) appeared in Britain in 1994. He allegedly belonged to an Algerian terror group, procuring communication equipment and other support for extremists in Chechnya and Algeria
- 'G' was an active supporter of the GSPC, which was then sponsoring young Muslims in Britain to go to Afghanistan to train for *jihād*. Because of mental health problems, 'G' had been granted bail
- 'H' came to Britain in 1993. He claimed asylum and was allowed to stay as a refugee. Later, he 'expressed bewilderment' that he should be considered a security risk. He was also said to be an active supporter of the GSPC
- Mahmoud Suliman Ahmed Abu Rideh (32) came to Britain as an asylum-seeker in 1995. Since July 2002 he had been held in Broadmoor high-security hospital because he had 'real difficulties in handling stress' and found it necessary 'to spend time on his own in the dark'. He was alleged

to be an active supporter of terrorist groups, including those with links to bin Laden's network. His activities were said to include fund-raising. He claimed only to have been involved in welfare and charity work

- 'P' arrived in Britain in February 1999. His left arm has been amputated at the wrist and the right just below the elbow. He was refused asylum. In February 2001, he was charged with possession of articles for suspected terrorist purposes, conspiracy to defraud and conspiracy to make false documents. The charges had been dropped and he had been released in May 2001. Since then he was alleged to be an associate of Algerian extremists engaged in active support for various international terrorist groups, including those associated with bin Laden. He was said to have supported at least two terrorist cells planning chemical and biological attacks in the UK
- 'I' appeared in the UK in 1995 to claim asylum. He allegedly undertook 'a range of support activities including fund-raising on behalf of terrorist groups, including networks associated with bin Laden'
- 'S' arrived in the UK from Pakistan in November 1998 on a forged Belgian passport. He claimed asylum. He was allegedly 'a member of a group of *Mujahideen* engaged in active support for various international terrorist groups'
- 'U' was arrested in February 2001 on suspicion of being involved in planning attacks on Los Angeles airport and the Christmas market in Strasbourg, France. According to security forces, 'U' first came to the UK in 1994, after spending time in a *Mujahideen* training camp in Afghanistan (AP 2007j)
- 'K', an asylum seeker who was part of Abu Doha's network, formed part of the London network's financial and logistical support base. He was arrested in July 2001 while trying to enter Pankisi Gorge on his way to Chechnya on a French passport. He had in his possession the telephone numbers of Kadre and other senior GSPC members. As part of the ricin plot, 'K' stayed in the basement of Finsbury Park mosque between 1999 and 2000 (Vidino 2006:180)
- 'E' was an alleged member of the FIT

On 24 August 2005, Atamnia Yacine, an Algerian wanted by Britain in connection with the July bombings in London, was arrested in the Sukhumvit

Soi Nana area in Bangkok, Thailand. He was in possession of 180 fake French and Spanish passports and was believed to have provided false travel documents to the bomb suspects (BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific 2005). The EU had previously named Thailand as a hub for document forgery. On 3 August 2005, Mahieddine Daikh (35), a UK citizen of Algerian origin, had been arrested in Bangkok for trying to smuggle more than 450 forged European passports from Thailand to Scotland (AFP 2005e).

In July 2007, Younes Tsouli, a Moroccan, British-born Waseem Mughal and Jordanian-born Tariq al-Daour were sentenced to a total of 24 years in prison for inciting terrorism over the internet in the first case of its kind in Britain. Tsouli (23) had set up a site to host video files and other documentation that had eventually become the de facto administrator of the online *jihadi* forum *Muntada al-Ansar al-Islami*, at one time the main internet public relations mouthpiece of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Waseem Mughal (24), a law student, was found with a computer containing a 26-minute video in Arabic containing instructions for making suicide-bomb vests and home-made explosives. Tariq al-Daour (21), a biochemistry student, was charged with using computer viruses and stolen credit card accounts to set up a network of communications forums and websites inciting violence (Krebs 2007).

Spain

An estimated 300 suspected extremists were arrested in Spain following the 9/11 attacks in the US. Many of them had been on North African wanted lists since moving to Europe in the 1990s to establish networks in European countries, including Spain. Since 9/11 and, later, the Madrid bombings of 2003, European countries acknowledged that many extremists had abused the liberal democracies and their almost open-arms policy towards political asylum seekers. Nonetheless Spanish police arrested seven GIA members in Valencia in April 1997 (Gunaratna 2002:165).

Investigations after 9/11 led to a number of arrests, convictions and deportations. Among those that received attention was a member of the Hofstad network, Muhammad Achraf, an Algerian who headed a group in Spain called 'Martyrs for Morocco', who was in contact with Mohammed Bouyer, who had been prosecuted in the Netherlands for the murder of Theo Van Gogh. In addition to procuring funds for the Hofstad group, Achraf was wanted by Spanish police for his part in an October 2004 plot to attack the country's national court, which was the headquarters of the Madrid bombing investigations (Atwan 2006:239-240).

As already mentioned, Algerians returning to France from Chechnya preferred to travel via Spain, which had a strong GSPC base. In addition to Merouane Benahmed, who used this route in 2002, Noureddine Merabet was arrested on the Franco-Spanish border on 21 December 2002 on his way to France (Vidino 2006:177). In April 2004 a Spanish judge charged four Algerian members of the GSPC with membership of *al-Qa'eda* (AFP 2004d). The four had worked in support of the French cell led by Benahmed, who was arrested in December 2002, and had received training in Afghanistan from Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. A mobile phone detonator, similar to those used in the Bali nightclub and Madrid train bombing attacks, was found in their possession (Reuters 2004b).

In July 2004 Morocco warned Spain that it had lost track of 400 of the 600 Moroccan Islamist militants who had trained in *al-Qa'eda* camps in Afghanistan, Bosnia or Chechnya (Reuters 2004c). However, a Spanish report of 17 December 2004 indicated that police had arrested four Moroccans on suspicion of belonging to an armed Islamist group, including one man believed to be linked to the 11 March train bombings that killed and injured 191 people. The arrests took place on the Spanish Canary Island of Lanzarote, off the coast of Morocco. All four were suspected of belonging to the GICM. The leader was identified as Hassan El Haski (41), who had been the subject of an arrest warrant for the Madrid bombings. He was also suspected of being behind the murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh on 2 November 2004 in Amsterdam (AFP 2004e). The others ranged in age from 31 to 40 years and one was described as an imam in a Spanish mosque. Their homes were being searched. The four were suspected of attempting to establish a logistical base on Lanzarote (Reuters 2004d).

On 27 December 2004 a Madrid judge also charged three Moroccans with belonging to a radical cell that planned to buy explosives for a terrorist attack in Spain or Morocco. Majid Bakkali, Mohamed Douha and Mustafa Farhaoui were charged with being members of a terrorist group and conspiracy to buy explosives. Bakkali and Douha were arrested in northeast Spain on 22 December, while Farhaoui was picked up three days later. Police had begun watching the group in September when they made contact with a suspected intermediary in an unspecified central European country for the purchase of explosives (Dow Jones International News 2004d).

On 3 January 2006, Spanish authorities arrested Mohammed Aberrada (20), a Moroccan, on an international arrest warrant issued by Morocco on suspicion of belonging to the GSPC. Mohamed Larbi Ben Sellam, another Moroccan suspected of aiding the Iraq insurgency, was also in custody, and

in May 2006 the Spanish parliament agreed to extradite both Aberrada and Sellam to Morocco (AFP 2006c).

On another international arrest warrant, Spanish authorities arrested Mbark el Jaafari in early February 2007 in Reus. Government sources said that el Jaafari was suspected of having received training in Afghanistan and of belonging to a terrorist structure in the service of *al-Qa'eda* and to the GSPC, which were dedicated to the recruitment of volunteers for the holy war in Morocco, Iraq and Algeria. The sources said that this terrorist structure was believed to have planned over a period of nine months to send 32 suicide bombers to carry out suicide attacks in Iraq and to plan operations inside Morocco after receiving training in GSPC training camps (AFP 2007n).

On 9 February 2007 a court in Madrid sentenced five Algerian members of a group of 16 Algerians and Moroccans who had been arrested in Barcelona in January 2003 to 13 years' imprisonment. The five were Mohamed Tahraoui, Ali Kouka, Smail Boudjelthi, Souhil Kouka and Mohamed Amine Benoura. A sixth, Mohammed Nebbar, was found not guilty. According to the court, three of the five had formed a militant cell in the late 1990s after they had left Algeria. 'The cell, which had contact with other suspected Islamist radicals in Britain, France and Germany, was believed to have worked to spread extremist Islamist propaganda, to recruit followers among Muslims in Spain, and to organise safe houses for combatants on the run and storage points for material needed to carry out the attacks' (AP 2007k).

Mohammed Laksir and Miftah Idrissi, two Moroccans suspected of being members of the Islamic Party of Liberation, were arrested in Barcelona on 26 June 2007 on suspicion of planning to travel to Iraq to participate in the insurgency. Instead of standing trial in Spain, the Spanish government approved the extradition of the two suspects to Morocco in October 2007 (AFP 2007o).

Casablanca and Madrid bombings

The involvement of North African countries in the Madrid bombings was confirmed when the two Moroccan Beniyach brothers wanted for the 11 March attacks were identified as being among the suspects who blew themselves up during a police raid in early April 2004. Of the seven bodies found in the rubble of an apartment building, only four had been officially identified, including suspected mastermind Serhane Ben Abdelmajid Fakhet, alias the Tunisian, and alleged logistics chief Jamal Ahmidan, a Moroccan.

Fakhet, who had moved to Spain in 1996 and who was believed to be the group's spiritual leader, also recruited young new members at his mosque. Ahmidan, a Moroccan, was a drug dealer and cleric who had used drug money to buy dynamite. Jailed in Morocco in 2000 for murder, Ahmidan was allegedly radicalised during his imprisonment (*The Guardian* 2007). Another suspect, Salahuddin Beniyach, a Moroccan who had fought in Chechnya in the Khattab Brigade, served as an example of the role of former Chechnyan fighters in the cell (Vidino 2006:208).

Of 18 Madrid bombing suspects in custody, 14 were Moroccans. According to a report, the GICM had sleeper cells in Britain, Belgium, France, Italy and Canada. After Nouredine Nfia, its leader, had been arrested, Taeb Ben Tizi had been appointed the new leader, with Mohamed Guerbouzi his deputy. Contact with *al-Qa'eda* was established in July 2000 when Nfia met Ayman al-Zawahiri in Afghanistan. Al-Zawahiri, the leader of the original Egypt-based *Jamaat al-Jihad al-Islami*, was known to have been Osama bin Laden's second in command (AFP 2004f).

In follow-up operations, police arrested five people believed to have helped three suspects to escape from Morocco after the 2004 bombings. The three who escaped were Mohamed Afalah, who died in a subsequent suicide attack in Iraq in May 2005, and Mohamed Belhaj and Daoud Ouhnane, who were believed to have joined foreign fighters in Iraq. The five arrested were Zohaib Khadiri, Djilali Boussiri, Nasreddine Ben Laid Amrii, Taha Seghrouchni and Kamal Ahbar (Dow Jones International News 2007j). During the arrest police seized false documents, receipts for telephone calls to Afghanistan, cash and three computers (Reuters 2007m). Samir Tahtah, who was also part of the network, was subsequently imprisoned after being convicted of belonging to a Syrian-based network recruiting suicide bombers to attack US troops in Iraq.

A second group, *Salafia Jihadia*, was implicated in both the Madrid and the Casablanca bombings. The GICM is believed to have been the forerunner of *Salafia Jihadia*, which was the first radical Islamist movement in Morocco. According to the US State Department, the GICM, which was formed in the late 1990s, included Moroccans trained in Afghanistan.

Three of the suspects detained after the Madrid bombings were reported to be Moroccans, including alleged *al-Qa'eda* member Jamal Zougam (30), who left Morocco three weeks after the Casablanca suicide attacks. Zougam, who was arrested two days after the bombings, was believed to have been a link between the GICM – blamed for the bombings in Casablanca – and a

Spanish *al-Qa'eda* cell, especially since Zougam met Guerbouzi, a leader of the GICM based in the UK, prior to the attack. Zougam was also understood to have been acquainted with the man assumed to have headed the former *al-Qa'eda* cell in Spain, Imadeddin Barakat Yarkas, alias Abu Dahdah (Wright 2004).

Nationals from other North African countries implicated in initial investigations after the Madrid bombings included (Johnson 2005):

- Abdel Karim Mejjati (34), a Moroccan who was killed by Saudi Arabia security officials in a shoot-out in 2005. Mejjati played a leading role in the May 2003 bombings in Casablanca. Contrary to the perception that only young people from poor socio-economic backgrounds are susceptible to extremism, Mejjati came from a privileged background and attended an exclusive French school in Morocco before turning to terrorism (Haven 2006)
- Amer el Azisi, a Moroccan and one of the alleged leaders of the GICM, was suspected to have been one of the masterminds of the Madrid bombings. Azisi, who was also an *al-Qa'eda* recruiter, was trained in Afghanistan and Bosnia in the late 1990s. He headed operations for the GICM with Abdel Karim Mejjati and Saad Houssaini, both of whom were suspected of having been involved in the Madrid and Casablanca bombings (Haven 2004)
- Hassan el-Haski, a Moroccan veteran of Afghan training camps, was arrested in December 2004 in the Canary Islands with Abdallah Mourib and Brahim Atia El Hammouchi. According to a Spanish court, documents based on Belgian and French intelligence indicated that el-Haski was a senior operative in the GICM. After the group was partly dismantled by police in Spain and Belgium in the spring of 2004, el-Haski allegedly led an effort to revive it (AFP 2004a). GICM supporters told French police in late 2004 that according to el-Haski the group carried out the Madrid attacks. El-Haski also shared an apartment with Mourib, an imam at the mosque in the Lanzarote town of Puerto del Carmen. A former head of the GICM, Nafia in turn told Spanish authorities in 2003 that other members of el-Haski's family were allegedly involved in the group. Investigators also searched for information on one of his brothers, Mehdi el-Haski, formerly a top security official inside the GICM, who went missing. Another brother, Lahoussine el-Haski, was arrested in Belgium in 2004 after having sought political asylum. Lahoussine el-Haski was also believed to have been an associate of Abdeladim Akoudad, the

Moroccan jailed for heading a militant cell and also believed responsible for the killing of Theo van Gogh (Prades 2004)

Another of the suspected radicals, Mustafa Setmariam Nasar, alias Abu Musab, had settled in Madrid in the 1980s before (according to Spanish court documents) moving to London in 1995 where he edited the internal magazine of the GIA. He left London in about 1998, apparently for Afghanistan. Spanish police believe that he may have played a role in the Madrid bombings. He briefly resurfaced on an Islamist website in June 2005 with a call to arms to Muslim youth to join the *jihād* in Iraq (Johnson and Vitzthum 2001).

On 1 February 2005, Spain's interior minister announced that security forces had arrested four members of the same Moroccan family who had been directly linked to the Madrid bombings. They were husband and wife Allal Moussaten (43) and Safia Belhaj (42) and their sons Brahim and Mohamed Moussaten. The four were believed to have had links with the GICM. They were arrested in the Madrid suburb of Leganes following police operations in Belgium, France and Spain (AFP 2005f).

Later, in December 2006, and with the agreement of the Moroccan government, Spanish authorities went to Morocco to interrogate several Moroccans suspected of being involved in the Madrid bombings. They were Khaled Isik, Mohamed Haddad, Hicham Hmidane, Abdelilah Ahriz and Mustapha Mimouni. Mimouni, who was serving a 15-year sentence in Tangiers, knew Abdelmajid Sarhane who was married to Mimouni's sister. Spanish authorities found a handwritten note and fingerprints in an apartment in Leganes, Madrid, that was blown up after the Madrid attack (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2006m).

The following individuals from North Africa were indicted on 15 February 2007 for their involvement in the 2004 Madrid bombings (AFP 2007p).

- Rabei Ousmane Sayed Ahmed (37). Egyptian. Accused of being a plot organiser. Acquitted
- Hassan El Haski (44), alias Abu Hamza. Moroccan. Accused of being a plot organiser and alleged leader of the GICM in Spain was arrested on the Canary Islands in December 2004. Acquitted on the main charge but convicted of belonging to a terrorist organisation and sentenced to 15 years in prison (Hamilos 2007)
- Youssef Belhaj (32), alias the Afghan. Moroccan. He was arrested in Belgium in February 2005. Accused of being a plot organiser. Acquitted

on the main charge but convicted of belonging to a terrorist organisation and sentenced to 12 years in prison (Hamilos 2007)

- Jamal Zougam (34). Moroccan. Suspected bomber. Accused of placing at least one of the rucksack bombs on the train. Found guilty of murder and attempted murder and sentenced to 42,922 years in prison. Zougam, who ran a mobile phone shop in Madrid, supplied most of the mobile phones used to set off the explosive devices. A fingerprint on a SIM card in an unexploded bomb connected Zougam to the bombs and the attack (*The Guardian* 2007)
- Abdelmajid Bouchar (25). Moroccan. Suspected bomber was present in the apartment in Leganés on 3 April 2004 before the police raid but managed to escape. He was later arrested in Belgrade in 2005 and extradited to Spain. He was sentenced to 18 years in prison (AP 2007m)
- Fouad El-Morabit El-Amghar (24). Moroccan. Accused of belonging to a terrorist organisation and who also had contact with Rabei Osman. He was convicted and sentenced to 12 years in prison (AP 2007m)
- Othman El-Gnaoui (23). Moroccan. Alleged to have been the right-hand man of Ahmidan. Accused of belonging to a terrorist organisation and procuring and transporting explosives. Found guilty of murder and attempted murder and sentenced to 42,924 years in prison (*The Guardian* 2007)
- Abdelilah El-Fadoaul El-Akil (38). Moroccan. Accused of belonging to a terrorist organisation (linked to a house on the outskirts of Madrid where the explosive devices were built). He was sentenced to nine years in prison (AP 2007m)
- Rachid Aglif (28), Jamal Ahmidan's right-hand man. Moroccan. Accused of belonging to a terrorist organisation, actively taking part in the negotiations in getting the explosives as well as transporting explosives. He was sentenced to 18 years in prison (AP 2007m)
- Mohamed Bouharrat (28). Moroccan. Accused of belonging to a terrorist organisation responsible for recruiting new members and gathering intelligence on possible targets and transporting explosives. He was sentenced to 12 years in prison (AP 2007m)
- Saed El-Harrak (35). Moroccan. Accused of belonging to a terrorist organisation was sentenced to 12 years in prison (AP 2007m)

- Mohamed Larbi Ben Sellam (30). Moroccan. Accused of belonging to a terrorist organisation and conspiring to commit murder was sentenced to 12 years in prison (AP 2007m)
- Rafa Zouhier (28). Moroccan. Accused of collaborating with a terrorist organisation and transporting explosives was sentenced to 10 years in prison (AP 2007m)
- Hamid Ahmidan (30) cousin of Jamal Ahmidan. Moroccan. Accused of collaborating with a terrorist organisation and drug trafficking was sentenced to 23 years in prison (AP 2007m)
- Mohamed Moussaten (23). Moroccan. Accused of collaborating with a terrorist organisation in assisting suspects involved in the attacks to leave Spain after the attacks. Acquitted (AP 2007m)
- Brahim Moussaten (24), the brother of Mohamed Moussaten. Moroccan. Accused of collaborating with a terrorist organisation. Acquitted (EFE News Service 2007)
- Nasreddine Bousbaa (46). Algerian. Accused of collaborating with a terrorist organisation and falsifying documents was sentenced to three years in prison (AP 2007m)

Iraq recruitment and training

Links between Morocco and Spain were not limited to groups planning and executing acts of terrorism in Morocco and Spain. For example, after Spanish police had arrested Mbark el-Jaffari, a Moroccan, in Reus in 2007, he was charged with recruiting GSPC members to conduct operations in Morocco, Algeria and Iraq. At the time, the Spanish interior minister commented: 'This terrorist structure is believed to have made moves to send, since May last year, 32 suicide bombers, after being trained in Algerian training camps, to carry out suicide attacks in Iraq and to plan operations inside Morocco' (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007q).

El-Jaffari was, however, not the first such person arrested. In June 2005, for example, Spanish authorities arrested 20 people across Spain, suspected of belonging to cells recruiting volunteers to be sent to Iraq. They included 15 Moroccans, three Spaniards, an Algerian and a Turk. Larbi Ben Sellam, the Algerian, was believed to have organised the flight from Spain of

suspected bombers Mohamed Afalah, Mohamed Belhaj and probably Daoud Ohnane.

Later, in January 2006, Spanish police announced that they had arrested Omar Nakcha (23), a Moroccan whom they suspected of being the leader of two cells recruiting volunteers to fight in Iraq. Nakcha was also believed to have helped suspects in the March 2004 Madrid train bombings to flee the country. He was arrested near Santa Coloma de Gramanet in the Catalonia region of northeast Spain. Nakcha also organised the movement of suspects from Belgium to Iraq via Syria. In addition he also supplied fighters to the leader of an *al-Qa'eda* cell in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, and had ties with the GICM and the GSPC. His cell was allegedly also in touch with sympathisers in Algeria, Belgium, France, Iraq, Morocco, the Netherlands, Syria and Turkey. The cell was also implicated in an attack in November 2003 on a military base in Iraq, carried out by an unidentified Algerian and killing or injuring 28 people, including 19 Italian soldiers. This attack was claimed by *al-Qa'eda* (AFP 2006d), confirming the complexity of networks and operations between Europe, North Africa and the Middle East.

In June 2007, Spanish security forces dismantled a cell of Moroccan nationals linked to GSPC/AQLIM and charged with recruiting extremists with the aim of sending them to training camps in the Sahel. Included were Mohamed Lachgar (23), Moulay Lahsene Drissi (27) and Mohamed Agzin (32) (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007dk). Abdellatif Zehraoui (29) was arrested near Barcelona (AFP 2007r), while the Spanish authorities arrested six people in Burgos in October 2007 for recruiting Islamist militants to fight in the insurgency in Iraq. Abdelkader Ayachine, an Algerian who allegedly led this cell, ran a Muslim butchery in Burgos. Other members were identified as Mohamed Mouas, Smaine Kadouci and Yahia Drif from Algeria, and Wissan Lotfi and Fatima Zahrae Raissouni from Morocco. Members of the group called themselves *Los Ansar*, in an apparent reference to *Ansar al-Islam* in Iraq (Woolfs 2007). According to the Spanish authorities, the suspects had used internet chat rooms to recruit militants – the first such example in Spain – as well as to distribute audiovisual material and other terrorist propaganda and to raise funds for jailed terrorists. Spanish security forces made a number of other arrests, and these cases will be discussed in the section on Iraq.

One group that increasingly raised the concern of Spanish security forces was *Tanzim Tahrir al-Andalus*, or the Andalusia Liberation Organisation. Headed by Nadim al-Maghrebi, it has since its formation in 2004 called for *jihad* against Spain, particularly the liberation of Ceuta and Melilla (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007dl). *Al-Qa'eda*, through Ayman al-Zawahiri, also began to

refer to Spain as al-Andalus (Indo-Asian News Service 2007). In addition to direct *al-Qa'eda* threats against Ceuta and Melilla, Algerian members of GSPC/AQLIM using the pseudonym of Nadim al Magrebi left a message in May 2006 on *alansar*, a website with links to *al-Qa'eda*, calling for 'war against the Spanish state to liberate the occupied cities of Ceuta and Melilla' (Irujo 2006).

These developments, the Madrid bombings and the fact that 300 Islamists were arrested since the Madrid bombings, fuelled perceptions that Spain was increasingly being threatened by extremism and terrorism involving networks headed by or in contact with individuals from North Africa.

Belgium

In recent years Belgium has served as a secondary base for North African Islamist extremists involved in counterfeiting, financing and providing safe havens. Although Belgium had not yet been the target of transnational terrorism, the presence in the country of networks including individuals from North Africa in Europe has been a cause for concern.

A high-profile terrorist trial in September 2003 ended with guilty verdicts against 18 people who had been charged with forging passports and visas for volunteers to travel to Afghanistan. These volunteers included Abdelsatar Dahmane and Rashid El Ouar, who assassinated Afghan resistance leader Ahmad Shah Masood two days before the 9/11 attacks in the US. Tarek Maaroufi, a Tunisian and leader of the Brussels cell, assisted Abu Doha in the UK to create a large support network in Europe to provide recruits with money, accommodation and false documents. As early as 1991, Maaroufi confessed to Belgian authorities that he was in contact with Rachid Ramda and other Algerian leaders based in London. He was convicted and sentenced to six years' imprisonment on a charge of recruiting Muslims in European countries to attend *al-Qa'eda* training camps in Afghanistan (Vidino 2006:159).

On 19 March 2004, as part of a series of some 20 raids in Brussels, Antwerp and other Belgian centres, anti-terrorist police arrested a suspect wanted for the terrorist attacks in Casablanca in 2003 and at least five other people. This followed a probe into alleged Islamist militants from North Africa who had undergone paramilitary training in camps in Afghanistan (Siuberski 2004).

On 29 August 2005, 18 men suspected of belonging to the GICM appeared before a court in Belgium. The men, most of them Moroccans, were suspected

of having links with those responsible for the March 2004 train bombings in Madrid and the May 2003 Casablanca attacks. They included:

- Khalid Bouloudo, the alleged Belgian coordinator of the GICM
- Abdelkader Hakimi, who was linked to the Madrid attacks
- Mourad Chabarou, who was alleged to have sheltered Mohammed Afalah, a suspect in the Madrid attacks. Police say his Brussels apartment contained fingerprints belonging to Afalah

These three men were also alleged to have been in contact with the Dutch branch of the GICM, the Hofstad group, in particular with Mohammed Bouyeri. Seven were held in preventive detention in Belgium, three in Spain, one in Morocco and one in Syria. The suspects were arrested in three operations, the first in March 2004 at Maaseik on the Belgian-Dutch border and the second and third in Brussels and Antwerp in June 2004. They were accused of being members of a terrorist group and of offences including use of forged documents and illegal residence, but, according to Belgian media, not for crimes directly linked to the Madrid and Casablanca bombings (AFP 2005g).

In February 2006, following the bombings in Madrid and Casablanca, a court in Belgium convicted three men of belonging to the GICM. Eight others were found guilty on lesser charges, and two were acquitted. Abdelkader Hakimi (40), was accused of heading a cell linked to the GICM, and Khalid Bouloudou (30) was identified as the group's Belgian coordinator as well as fundraiser and recruiter. Those arrested in Belgium formed part of a larger network of 18 accused, of whom 13 stood trial in Brussels. Three others were in custody in Spain before being tried and convicted by a Brussels court on 20 January 2007. They included el-Haski (see above), who was sentenced to seven years, Hakimi and Bouloudou, who were each sentenced to five years' imprisonment, and Mustafa Lounani, who was sentenced to six years' imprisonment. Another Moroccan, Mourad Chabarou (25), received a five-year sentence as a contact of Rabei Osman El Sayed, who had been involved in the Madrid bombings (EFE News Services 2006a).

In addition to the implications for Belgium of attacks in Afghanistan, Madrid, Casablanca and the Netherlands, a Belgium-Spanish network involved in the recruitment of fighters for Iraq will be discussed in the section dealing with African involvement in Iraq.

Italy

Following developments since 2000, Italian security forces monitored the activities of a group of Tunisians in contact with Algerians and Tunisians in London. Essid Sami Ben Khemais, alias Abu al-Muhajer (Tunisian national), the head of the cell and an Afghan veteran, operated from Milan. Although the cell was not directly implicated in an attack it played a supportive role to other European cells in providing safe havens and false documents (Vidino 2006:158-159). Ben Khemais was later suspected of planning an attack on the US Embassy in Rome in January 2001. As one of four Tunisian nationals convicted of association with intent to obtain and transport explosives and chemicals, he was sentenced to five years imprisonment. Back in Tunisia, Ben Khemais had already been tried *in absentia* and sentenced to 20 years imprisonment by a military court that found him 'guilty of membership of a terrorist organisation operating overseas'. (BBC News, 2002). Ben Khemais was also implicated in the 2006/7 attacks in Tunisia (discussed in chapter 2).

The Milan network was also particularly active in recruiting suicide bombers for Iraq. Members included Lofti Rihani, Morchidi Kamal, Hamsi Said and Yousfi Ben Tikani, and their case will also be discussed later in the chapter. *Ansar al-Islam*, based in Italy, was also connected to Germany through Abderrazak Mahdjoub, who headed a network in Hamburg. A member of an *Ansar al-Islam* recruitment network in Milan, Mohammed Daki, a Moroccan, provided passports to Maxamed Cabdullah Ciise to travel to Iraq (Vidino 2006:267).

In addition to being implicated in support operations, members of a cell that planned to bomb the US Embassy in Rome were arrested by Italian security forces on 4 April 2000. In accordance with US executive order 13224 of 22 November 2002, three members of the cell were accused and prosecuted in Italy for being members of a extremist Islamist terrorist organisation established in Cremona, Italy, in 1998 with the aim of committing terrorist attacks in Italy, Morocco, Tunisia and other countries, and having contact with *al-Qa'eda* and *Ansar al-Islam* cells in Italy and elsewhere. Additionally, the group had ties to the GICM in Morocco. The Cremona cell was charged with recruiting combatants, raising funds for terrorist activities and planning terrorist attacks. The three were (US Federal News 2005):

- Ahmed El Bouhali (44), a Moroccan, who was charged with participating in a criminal conspiracy to commit terrorist activities. He had formed the Cremona cell in 1998 and headed it until the summer of 2001. Investigators confiscated instruction manuals in his possession on paramilitary activities

including the construction of weapons, bombs and instruments for detecting government communications. In addition, leaflets on clandestine Islamist organisations and videotapes containing bin Laden's and other terrorist leaders' messages inciting violence were found. These materials were used by el Bouhali to recruit people for terrorist activities in Iraq

- Faycal (alias Faical) Boughanemi (41), a Tunisian, who was charged with participating in a criminal conspiracy to commit terrorist activities. He was a member of the Cremona cell from at least 2002 until 2004, where he helped to plan and recruit individuals for terrorist attacks in Tunisia. In addition, he conspired to carry out terrorist attacks on the Cremona cathedral and the Milan metro
- Abdelkader Laagoub (32), a Moroccan, who was charged with participating in a criminal conspiracy to commit terrorist activities. He had helped form the Cremona cell in 1998, and succeeded el Bouhali as its head until February 2004

Italian investigators into organised crime and money laundering uncovered the Milan cell in 2003. This was also aligned to the GSPC. Its members included El Mahfoudi Mohamed, a Moroccan-born imam based at the Gallarate mosque, north of Milan, Abdooui Iyousef, its leader, and Ramzi bin al-Shaibah, alias Ramzi Binalshibh, who had earlier been arrested in Pakistan in 2002 on suspicion of providing logistical assistance to the 9/11 terror plot. Charges included providing financial and logistical support to Islamist terrorist networks, trafficking in illegal immigrants, receiving counterfeit documents and trafficking in stolen cars. In addition to providing logistical support, the cell also recruited members of the immigrant communities to be sent abroad for military training (Parodi 2003).

In July 2005 Othman Deramchi (51), alias Abu Yusef, a member of the GSPC, was arrested in Marseilles in a joint operation by members of the French and Italian security forces after Italy had issued a Europe-wide warrant for his arrest. Deramchi was wanted by the Italian authorities after he had been sentenced in absentia to eight years' imprisonment on charges of trafficking false identity documents in connection with terrorist activities (AFP 2005h).

Other cases that attracted the attention of Italian authorities included the following (Dow Jones International News 2005a):

- On 6 September 2005 Bourki Bouchta was arrested at his home in Turin and was deported to Morocco in terms of new security measures that

had been approved in July and which simplified the process of deporting people suspected of having links with groups deemed terrorist by the government

- Previously, in 2003, Italy had deported Imam Abdul Qadir Fall Mamour to his native Senegal after he came out in favour of attacks on Italians in Afghanistan and Iraq as allies of the US. At the time, Bourki Bouchta (see above) had spoken out strongly against the expulsion of Mamour, saying that the government had punished the preacher for his opinions. Bouchta had first made headlines in Italy in 1999 when he had led thousands of Muslims in Turin in a march to demand that women be allowed to wear veils in identity document photographs
- On 24 March 2006, Italian security forces arrested eight Moroccans and a Tunisian for allegedly planning an attack on the San Petronio church in Bologna and the Milan metro. Mohamed Benhedi Msahel (37), a Moroccan and a resident of Milan, was believed to be the leader of this group (BBC Monitoring Europe 2006)
- In October 2006, a Milan court charged three Tunisians with joining a criminal organisation with the intention of committing a terrorist act. Samir Sassi and Sharif Bin-Abd-al-Hakim were sentenced to six years' imprisonment each, while Muhammad Manna was given a 64-month sentence. The three men were accused of forming a group connected to *Ansar al-Islam* that was planning to attack the same two targets as in the previous example (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007dm)
- Extremist activities linked to Bologna had been suspected as early as 1993, when Italian police had intercepted a letter written by Mondher Ben Mohsen Baazaoui, alias Hamza the Tunisian. Baazaoui, a member of *an-Nahda*, was also a Bosnian *Mujahideen*. His letter had been written to Imam Mohamed Saidani in Bologna, who in turn knew Anwar Shaaban, a member of the European Shura Council, and Osama bin Laden (Kohlmann 2004:76)
- On 8 February 2007 a court in Tunis sentenced seven Tunisians – most of whom had been extradited from Italy – to between five and eight years' imprisonment for belonging to *Ahl al-Sunna wal Gama'a*. The principal defendant was Mehdi Kammoun, who was believed to have visited Afghanistan before serving a jail sentence in Italy for allegedly leading a terrorist cell in Milan. Kammoun was also convicted on charges of conspiracy to traffic in arms, explosives and chemical weapons, receiving

stolen goods, making and using forged documents, and facilitating illegal immigration to Italy (US Department of the Treasury 2002)

- The dismantling of the Perugia, or Ponte Felcino, cell in July 2007 kept the spotlight on the activities of foreign Muslim communities in Italy. Three Moroccans – Korchi el-Mostapha (41), an imam of the Ponte Felcino mosque, and his two aides, Mohamed el-Jari (47) and Driss Safika (46) – were arrested on suspicion of providing training in explosives. Police confiscated computer files that included videos and documents downloaded from the internet on weapons training and instructions on how to prepare poisons and explosives, how to fly a Boeing 747 and how to encrypt messages. These were claimed to have been used to recruit new followers to *jihad*. According to the investigators, the suspects were in contact with members of the GICM who had been arrested in Belgium in 2005 (Kiefer 2007). El-Mostapha was also alleged to have been in contact with Abdelaziz Ouechtati, a Tunisian living in Naples (BBC Monitoring Europe 2007a)
- As a consequence of the dismantling of the Perugia cell, security forces in Italy, France, Portugal and the UK made further arrests of 17 Algerians, one Tunisian and two others in early November 2007 on suspicion of being involved in the recruitment of suicide bombers for Afghanistan and Iraq. Among those arrested in operations in Italian centres including Milan, Bergamo, Reggio Emilia and Varese were Dridi Sabri, Mehidi Ben Nasr and Imed Ben Zarkaoui – who were believed to be senior member of *Salafia Jihadiyya*. Ali Ben Zidane Chehidi and Mohammed Salah Ben Hamadi Khemiri were arrested in the UK cities of Croyden and Manchester under an Italian arrest warrant. According to Italian security forces, Chehidi and Khemiri had forged documents to facilitate the illegal entry into Italy of volunteers for the *jihad* in Iraq and Afghanistan between 2003 and 2005 (Agnew 2007)

Germany

GIA cells were formed in Germany and other European countries in the wake of anti-terrorism successes in France. Earlier, the AIS had based its exiled leadership council, headed by Rabah Kebir, in Germany. In addition, military cells operated through so-called charities in France and Germany were used to procure weapons for use in Algeria (Gunaratna 2002:165). Adel Mechat, an Algerian member of the FIS, was extradited from Germany to France in 1998 and given a six-year prison sentence for his involvement in plots to attack the 1998 World Cup and 2000 European football championships (AFP 2006e).

The Frankfurt cell responsible for the Strasbourg bombing plot was probably the best example of North African involvement in terrorism activities in Germany. Mohammed Bensakhria, alias Meliani al Ansari al-Germi, was identified as the leader of the cell, under the direction of Abu Doha in London. Other members included Hicham el Haddad, Lamine Maroni, Fouhad Sabour, Aroubi Benali.

Meliani, who trained in Afghanistan, was a veteran of the Bosnian war, where he fought with Ahmed Ressam, who was implicated in the millennium plot. El Haddad and Maroni were Algerians who had applied for political asylum in the UK, where they resorted to crime. They were gradually radicalised under the influence of Abu Doha and were sent for training in Afghanistan, where they met Sabour who had dual Algerian and French citizenship. Sabour had earlier been arrested on suspicion of involvement in the GIA bombing of the Paris metro in 1995, but was released in the same year.

On their arrival in London, Sabour, el Haddad and Maroni sold drugs to fund their activities. Sabour and Maroni left for Frankfurt in October 2000, where they met Aroubi Benali, another Algerian. Benali had openly confessed his association with the FIS when he applied for political asylum in 1992. The German authorities denied him asylum and issued him with an expulsion order. Benali stayed, however, and the order was never enforced, which was a common practice at the time. In Frankfurt, members of the cell used forged credit cards to pay for the planned attacks on the Strasbourg cathedral and Christmas market in December 2000. However, the security forces of Germany and France arrested members of the cell before the attacks could be carried out (Vidino 2006:147-162). At their trial, el Haddad was sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment, Sabour to 11 years and six months, Maroni to 11 years and Benali to ten years. Meliani was arrested in Spain on 22 June 2001 and extradited to France, where he was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment for his involvement in the plot.

Investigations revealed that the cell was in constant contact with the Algerian network in London, particularly with Abu Doha, its leader, as well as Slimane Khalfaoui. Mustafa Labsi, who was also implicated in the millennium plot in the US, was in charge of daily communications with the Frankfurt cell. Labsi was arrested in Berlin in February 2000 while using a false credit card. In addition to the above-mentioned, Rabah Kadre, Abu Doha's deputy in London, was also directly involved in the plot since his fingerprints were found in one of the cell's Frankfurt apartments. Kadre, the mastermind of the cyanide attack on the London underground, was tried in absentia in Paris for his involvement in the Strasbourg plot and sentenced to six years' imprisonment (Vidino 2006:153;156).

A number of other people originally from North Africa were also in custody in Germany, including (US Federal News 2007):

- Moustafa Djemel (34), who was born in Tiaret, Algeria, and who was awaiting trial in Germany, had a number of aliases including: Ali Barkani, born 22 August 1973 in Morocco; Belkacem Khaled, born 31 December 1979; Mostafa Djamel, born 31 December 1979 in Maskara, Algeria; Balkasam Kalad, born 26 August 1973 in Algeria; Belkasam Kalad, born 26 August 1973 in Algeria, Algeria; and Djamel Moustafa, born 28 September 1973 in Algeria
- Mohamed Ismail Yasser (34), alias Abu Shaweesh, born in Benghazi, Libya, who was detained in Germany in January 2005. He was arrested with an Egyptian travel document and two Egyptian passports
- Mustapha Nasri bin Abdul Kader (45), alias Ait El Hadi, born in Tunis, Tunisia, was also listed as an Algerian
- Mounir El Motassadeq (34), born in Marrakesh, Morocco, had been in detention since May 2007

A prominent Moroccan – in addition to the many Algerians – who was involved in terrorist plots and support operations in Germany, Mounir el Motassadeq was sentenced on 19 August 2005 to seven years in prison for membership in an *al-Qa'eda* cell whose members had included 9/11 suicide pilots Mohamed Atta, Marwan al-Shehhi and Ziad Jarrah. According to the judge, el Motassadeq became part of the Hamburg cell in 1999, before its leading members travelled to Afghanistan and were recruited for the attacks in the US. El Motassadeq had previously been convicted in 2003 on all the charges and given the maximum sentence. However, a German federal appeals court in 2004 overturned the conviction, ruling that he had been unfairly denied testimony from *al-Qa'eda* suspects in US custody. He had been freed shortly afterwards, but had soon been rearrested. At his retrial, which opened in August 2004, the US Justice Department provided summaries from the interrogation of Ramzi Binalshibh, a key 9/11 suspect held by the US. According to the statements, Binalshibh – believed to have been the Hamburg cell's liaison with *al-Qa'eda* – said that he and the three suicide pilots alone comprised the cell. El Motassadeq was one of two people charged in Germany in connection with the attacks. The other, a friend of el Motassadeq and also a Moroccan, Abdelghani Mzoudi, was tried on identical charges by another Hamburg court in 2007, but was acquitted due to a lack of evidence (Dow Jones International News 2005b).

In March 2007 Sweden extradited Abdelali Miftah, a Moroccan, to Germany (AFP 2007t). Germany also tried a man identified as Redouane EH (37), a Moroccan who held German citizenship, for funding the Iraqi insurgency. Redouane, who was arrested in Kiel in July 2006, allegedly transferred money to Egypt and Syria between August 2005 and July 2006. In addition to funding the insurgency in Iraq, Redouane had contact with extremists including Said Bahaji, who had close ties to three of the 9/11 pilots and who lived and studied in Hamburg, and Mohamed Atta. Bahaji escaped from Germany shortly before the 9/11 attacks and is wanted on an international arrest warrant issued by Germany. Redouane also had contact with other extremists in other European countries, including Sweden, where Abdelali M (25), another Moroccan, had been arrested on a German-issued warrant and handed over to Germany in May 2007. According to German prosecutors at his 20 December trial in Karlsruhe, Abdelali had assisted Redouane in supplying foreign fighters to Iraq and in forming a terror group in Sudan. He had also assisted in smuggling three men into Germany – a Moroccan, an Egyptian and a Saudi Arabian (Dow Jones International News 2007k). Thaeer A, a Jordanian, was being prosecuted separately, with three other people (BBC Monitoring Europe 2007b). It is interesting to note that immediately after their involvement in the 9/11 attacks these accused had redirected their attention to facilitating recruitment for Iraq.

The Netherlands

One of the best-known instances of involvement by members of the GSPC and GICM in the Netherlands was the Hofstad network, which had been implicated in the murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh. Mohammed Bouyeri is currently serving a life sentence for the murder. Bouyeri however did not act alone as originally thought, but was part of the Hofstad network, which had connections throughout Europe including cells involved in the bombings in Madrid and Casablanca. Dutch police subsequently took another 13 suspected members of the group into custody, including Rachid Belkacem, who had been arrested in London on 22 June 2005 and who was alleged to have had links with Muhammed Achraf, an Algerian in Spain (Atwan 2006:239).

In December 2006 a court sentenced four Islamist militants to jail for planning terrorist attacks on politicians, including Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende, and the headquarters of the Dutch intelligence agency. The court sentenced Dutch-Moroccan Samir Azzouz to eight years in jail for plotting the attacks. In September 2007, another Dutch court found Azzouz guilty on a charge of

planning attacks on government buildings, and added four years to his eight-year sentence for his involvement in the plots to attack Schiphol airport, a power station and the parliament building. This case had first been heard in 2005 but Azzouz had been acquitted. However, after his first conviction in 2006, this case against him had been reopened in 2007 (Reuters 2007n).

Reconfirming the central role of radical imams in mosques in Europe, the El-Tawheed mosque in Amsterdam was alleged to have played a central role in the radicalisation of Bouyeri and Azzouz. While the mosque is open to the public, radicalisation usually took place in smaller discussion groups. Other suspects included (Sterling 2006):

- Nouredine al Fatmi, who was already serving a five-year sentence in a separate terrorism case and who was given an additional four years' imprisonment for plotting attacks and for recruiting other members
- Mohammed Chentouf, who was also charged with plotting attacks, was also sentenced to four years
- Soumaya Sahla, al Fatmi's ex-wife, was given a three-year sentence for conspiracy
- Another defendant was convicted of passport fraud and given a three-month sentence
- A last defendant was acquitted of all charges

Greece

To a large extent, Greece was considered to be a safe haven or a 'facilitating' country in Europe. European security forces, including those of Britain, Portugal, France, Italy and the Netherlands, have made a number of arrests of people found with forged Greek identity cards and passports.

Anwar Mazrar was the best-known of these. He was arrested on 13 September 2005 at the Kipon customs office after being wanted by French and Moroccan authorities. First sought by the Moroccan police, Mazrar escaped to France where according to French intelligence he set up a network of Muslim extremists. Before he could be arrested, however, he escaped using a forged French passport. French intelligence informed the Greek authorities that Mazrar would try to enter Greece from Turkey on

a bus travelling from Istanbul to Thessaloniki. Based on this information, Mazrar had been arrested (BBC Monitoring Europe 2007).

United States and Canada

In addition to the involvement of Algerian, Moroccan and Tunisian nationals in Afghanistan (a list of Guantanamo Bay detainees is included as an annex) and Iraq, other Algerians arrested in the US and Canada included (Williams 2002:120-121):

- Hamid Aich, who was involved in a plot to smuggle explosives from Canada to the US
- Bouabide Chamchi, a member of the GIA, who was arrested in the US in December 1999, when he tried to enter the country with a false passport
- Abdelmajid Dahoumane, an accomplice of Ahmed Ressay (see below) and also linked to the GIA, who was arrested in Port Angeles, Washington, for his involvement in the 2000 millennium plot to blow up the Los Angeles international airport
- Mokhtar Haouari, a member of the GIA, who assisted in establishing an *al-Qa'eda* cell in Montreal, was implicated in the millennium plot and faced charges for forging travel documents
- Abdel Ghani Meskini, another Algerian, who was also implicated in the millennium plot

Ahmed Ressay, an Algerian, was convicted on 27 July 2005 for his part in the millennium plot and sentenced to 22 years in prison (Joscelyn 2005). At the outbreak of the conflict in Algeria, authorities had charged Ressay with arms trafficking. He however escaped first to France and then to Montreal, Canada. By January 1995, in addition to thieving, he became involved in credit card fraud and the falsification of documents. The mastermind behind this activity, Fateh Kamel, employed Ressay, making use of his criminal skills and radicalised him through a mosque with other cell members, including Abderraouf Hannachi, a Tunisian. Ressay, as a member of another group, also raised funds for Islamist groups in Algeria – in 1997 alone \$100 000 was collected. With the assistance of Hannachi, Ressay moved to Afghanistan for the period from March 1998 to early 1999, where he trained under Abu Zubaydah in the Khalden training camp. After Ressay returned, he and

other cell members, including Atmani, planned a number of bank robberies in order to finance the millennium plot. However, on 14 December 1999 he was stopped by a US border patrol near Vancouver, where investigators found explosives and timing devices (Kohlmann 2004:203-209).

During Ressam's cross-examination in the case in the US against Mokhtar Haouari in June-July 2001, it became known that Kamel had worked closely with Karim Said Atmani, alias Abu Hisham (linked to the Roubaix cell) who was living in Montreal. Both were Bosnian *Mujahideen* veterans. Atmani, a Moroccan, actively participated in the Algerian conflict during the 1990s and served as part of the Mansour Meliani commando group that was part of the GIA, responsible for the bombing of the Algiers international airport on 26 August 1992. Atmani, who was in contact with Abu Ma'ali, worked as Kamel's second in command with the Bosnian *Mujahideen*. In 1994 and 1995 Atmani was responsible for smuggling fighters from Europe to Bosnia. On his arrival in Canada, Atmani resorted to robberies to fund the smuggling activities. While befriending a group of young immigrants originally from North Africa, Atmani was arrested by Canadian authorities on 14 October 1998 with two other Algerians, but was later released despite the interest in him from French officials (Kohlmann 2004:203).

African involvement in Iraq

As a result of documents recovered in Sinjar, Syria, in September 2007, US security forces learned that of more than 700 foreign fighters brought into Iraq since August 2006, 305 had come from Saudi Arabia, 137 from Libya, 64 from Algeria, 50 from Morocco, 38 from Tunisia, 14 from Jordan, six from Turkey and two from Egypt. In other words, 291 of these 700-plus fighters, or about 39%, had come from North African countries. This was a far higher proportion than the previous military estimates of ten to 13 per cent from North Africa (Organisation of Asia-Pacific News Agencies 2007).

In addition to recruitment networks established in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, nationals from these countries were also responsible for recruitment networks established in Europe, including the Belgium-Spanish, French and Italian networks. The following discussion will use examples to summarise the structure and *modus operandi* of these networks:

The GICM formed the centre of the Belgium-Spanish network, which also included Italy, France and the Netherlands. This network was implicated in the following cases:

- Maymoun Belhaj was arrested in Syria on his way to Iraq in 2004. Wanted in Morocco, Belhaj had lived in Spain and later in Belgium. Belhaj contacted Abdelmajid Bouchar, a member of the GICM and implicated in the 2004 Madrid bombings, in Leganes, Madrid, as well as Mustapha Lounani, also implicated in the Madrid bombings and the brother-in-law of Serhane Bin Abdelmajid Fakhret, alias the Tunisian, who was also involved in the Madrid bombings. A member of the GICM in Schaarbeek, Belgium, Lounani was found guilty and sentenced to six years' imprisonment in Belgium for recruiting fighters to Iraq as well as for being in possession of forged passports and an instruction manual on mobile phone-controlled remote detonation devices. Lounani in turn put Belhaj in contact with Mustapha al-Jazairi, an Algerian who financially assisted Belhaj to leave Belgium. Lounani also put Belhaj in touch with Muhsin Khaibar, alias Abdelmajid al-Libi, alias Abdelmajid al-Yasser, alias Abdelqadir al-Hakimi, who was sentenced to death in Morocco in 1985 and was believed to be the leader of the GICM in Europe, based in Belgium. Both assisted Belhaj to go to Syria. Khaibar as well as al-Hakimi were arrested in Syria in May 2004 and deported to Morocco (Hafez 2007: 196-198)
- Abdelhy Asas, alias Abu Abdullah, was arrested in Syria on his way to Iraq in 2004. He was assisted by the same network that had facilitated Belhaj's travel to Iraq. His first contact person in Morocco was Abdelkarim al-Mijati, alias Abu al-Yas, who was wanted for the 2002 Casablanca bombings. Asas went to Syria with the assistance of Abbas al-Jazairi, an Algerian, and Abdelrahman al-Maghribi, a Moroccan, as well as Muhsin Khaibar, who had also assisted Belhaj (Hafez 2007: 199)

Implicated in the French network were (Hafez 2007:202-204):

- Redouane el-Hakim, a Tunisian, who was killed in Fallujah on 17 July 2004
- Tarek Ouinis, who was killed by a US patrol on 20 September 2004
- Abdelhalim Badjoudj, an Algerian, who was killed in a suicide attack on 20 October 2004. Prior to their involvement in Iraq, Ouinis and Badjoudj smoked marijuana, used alcohol, listened to rap music and wore Western clothing. Badjoudj returned to France in January 2004 to marry a French woman of Moroccan origin. Two months later he left for Iraq. Badjoudj and el-Hakim were unemployed and came from broken families. El-Hakim's brother, Boubaker, was arrested in Syria in August 2004. They were recruited through mosques, Muslim centres and militant websites run by several groups, including *Ansar al-Islam* (Smith and Van Natta 2004)

- Bazis Idris (41), an Algerian, who died in a suicide attack in February 2005. During the 1990s he spent time in Afghanistan and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Although he returned to France in the mid 1990s, he had gone back to Afghanistan in the late 1990s
- Said al-Maghrebi, a Moroccan, who was arrested by French authorities in April 2005 on his way to Iraq. He was in contact with Laurent Mourad Djoumakh and Samir Korhi, who were convicted by a court in Paris in December 2004 for their involvement in the Frankfurt cell that planned to attack the Strasbourg Christmas market in December 2000. Al-Maghrebi had spent time in Afghanistan during 1990 and had left for France in 2001 (AFP 2004h)
- Said Arif, an Algerian, who acted as a link between recruiters in France and Syria. Syrian authorities arrested him in May 2003 and extradited him to France in June 2004. Arif deserted the Algerian army and left for Afghanistan during the mid 1990s. Moving to Germany, Arif was in contact with Mohammed Bensakhria alias Meliani (see above), the leader of the Frankfurt cell. Avoiding arrest in Germany, Arif escaped to Pakistan. After the fall of the Taliban, Arif joined the Chechen rebels with Mabrouk Echiker, alias al-Moutana, an Algerian and member of the GIA and later the GSPC, who was also involved in the Strasbourg plot. Arif was also linked to Abu Doha and Rabah Kadre, based in London. After the arrest of Abu Doha, Kadre assisted Arif and Echiker in March 2001 to leave Europe. Echiker was killed in the Chechnya attacks against Russian targets carried out by the La Corneuve and Romainville cells in France (Vidino 2006:173)

The Italian recruitment network for Iraq included a cell in the Sorgane mosque that had been discovered in May 2004. Those involved included (Hafez 2007:205-207):

- Mohammed Rafik, who was a former imam at the mosque and who had links with the GICM, was arrested in October 2003 and charged with involvement in the 2003 Casablanca bombings
- Rachid Maami, an Algerian, the leader of the cell, and four other Tunisians from well-off families. Maami, linked to the GIA, used his position as imam to recruit followers

Sheikh Mahdjoub Abderrezak, an Algerian who had lived in Germany, was also implicated as one of the *al-Qa'eda* coordinators in Italy. He had arrived

in Germany as a political asylum seeker in 1992. When his application was rejected, he went to Afghanistan and later Chechnya. In 1999 he returned to Germany, where he married a German citizen. While in Hamburg, Abderrazak visited al-Quds mosque, which was headed by Shaikh al-Fazazi, who was implicated in the Casablanca bombings (Hafez 2007:205-207). Abderrezak was arrested in Hamburg by German police acting on an Italian warrant at the same time as two other suspects were arrested in Milan. They were Bouyahia Maher Ben Abdelaziz (33), a Tunisian, and Housni Jamal (20), a Moroccan. Two other alleged *al-Qa'eda* operatives, Muhammad Majid (33), an Iraqi, and a Tunisian woman, Bentiwaa Farida Ben Bechir, were wanted, while Toumi Ali Ben Sassi was already in Italian custody (Agnew 2003). Another, Jamal Housni, alias Jamal al-Maghrebi, a Tunisian, had assisted in the recruitment of Iraqi fighters and procured forged documents for *al-Qa'eda* members in Turkey (Hafez 2007:205-207).

Fadhil Saadi, a Tunisian, lived in Milan before he became an Iraqi suicide bomber in July 2003. Before he left for Iraq, Saadi had been implicated in the plan to assassinate Shah Masud in Afghanistan by delivering two Italian driver's licences, residence permits and Tunisian passports forged in Naples. In 2002 he had gone to Iraqi Kurdistan via France and then on to Iran, when he carried out his suicide attack.

Kamal Morchidi (22), a Tunisian and a member of the Ben Khemais cell, lived in Milan, Italy, before he carried out a suicide attack on the al-Rashid hotel in Baghdad on 26 October 2003, possibly targeting US Deputy Defence Secretary Paul Wolfowitz. He was trained in Afghanistan and was implicated in supplying forged documents to foreign fighters who wanted to enter Iraq (Rotella 2003).

Habib Waddani, alias Said, a Tunisian living in Milan, also carried out a suicide attack in Iraq. He was also wanted by Italy in September 2000 for trafficking weapons and explosives for *al-Qa'eda* training camps from Russia through Uzbekistan to Pakistan (Hafez 2007:205-207). Waddani was added to the US Treasury Department's list of individuals and groups associated with *al-Qa'eda* on 29 August 2002 (Dow Jones International News 2002).

Algeria

At an organisational level, officials in Algeria indicated that the GSPC and a group called *al-Taifa al Mansouri*, or Chosen and Victorious, had been involved in recruiting individuals to participate in the conflict in Iraq (MacGrory and Evans 2004).

Abu al-Hammam, the leader of the *Anjad al-Islam* group, was arrested in Algeria in June 2006 shortly after his return from Syria where he had lived since 2003. The arrest was made after investigations revealed that he was leading a cell that recruited Algerians to fight in Iraq and had arranged for them to travel to Syria and stay there before joining *Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn*, or the *Al-Qa'eda* in the Land of the Two Rivers. According to security sources, al-Hammam had also been instructed to recruit Tunisian fighters to be trained by GSPC/AQLIM before they were sent to Iraq (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007dm).

Reflecting on the effectiveness of these and other organisations and cells involved in the recruitment of Algerians in Iraq, US sources in March 2007 confirmed that about one in five suicide bombers in Iraq were from Algeria, while about one in 20 had originated from Morocco and Tunisia. The figures indicated growing cooperation between Islamist extremists in North Africa and Iraq. The US report continued: 'Moroccan groups have allocated about \$200,000 to provide transportation for "volunteers" to Iraq via Europe and Syria (...) [while they] still use other routes to Iraq through Turkey and Iran' (BBC Monitoring Middle East, 2007dn). Although it is very difficult to source verified information on the details, the names of a number of Algerians were made available. One of them was Walid Khelfallah (24), who died in a suicide operation on Green Square in Baghdad in November 2006 (BBC Monitoring Middle East, 2007do).

In September 2007 the Pakistani government announced that 45 Algerians arrested in Pakistan '(...) had enlisted in the ranks of the Taliban and [had], directly or indirectly, helped the Algerian armed Islamist groups during the terrorism decade' since the US invasion of Afghanistan. In 2006 Pakistan deported 20 Afghan-Algerians to Algeria after they had been arrested in Waziristan. Included in this group was Mehdi Rabah, who was suspected of 'being a former leading preacher who had taken part in the fighting with the American troops in Afghanistan. [Previously he] resided in Saudi Arabia during the 1990s before reaching Pakistan to occupy the post of teacher at the International University of Islamabad' (BBC Monitoring Middle East, 2007dp).

In July 2005 security forces revealed that an unnamed Egyptian Islamist had been arrested in Algeria. The suspect, the manager of a travel bureau, had been providing cover to Salafists leaving for Iraq via Syria. The case was reminiscent of the GSPC-Al-Zarqawi connection that might have been activated at the time of the abduction of Algerian diplomats in Iraq (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2005j). Some 150 Algerians were detained in 2007

alone in Syria on suspicion of attempting to cross the border between Syria and Iraq (Whitlock 2007b).

In another case, Syrian security authorities handed Adil Sakir al-Mukni, also known as Yasir Abu Sayyaf over to Algeria in September 2005. Abu Sayyaf used to be in charge of coordination between the GSPC and the Al-Zarqawiled *al-Qa'eda for Jihad Organization in the Land of the Two Rivers*. Adil Sakir, who was also in charge of GSPC's Internet website, was arrested in an Internet café. Information subsequently provided by Yasir Abu Sayyaf led to the dismantling of a Moroccan terrorist cell, whose members were on their way to Boumerdes. They were however arrested and handed over to the Moroccan authorities through the Oujda frontier post (opened exceptionally on 31 July to complete the handover process). Prior to his arrest in Syria, Yasir Abu Sayyaf had already been jailed three times in Algeria for supporting terrorist organizations. He was 17 years of age when he was first arrested. In December 2003, he decided to leave Algeria and settle in Syria (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2005k).

Iraqi recruitment networks in Algeria were particularly active in the east of the country, close to the border with Tunisia. Networks that had been operational for more than a year were in Reghiba, Guemar, Trifaoui and El-Oued, where most of the traditional fighting is concentrated. In El-Oued, the Essouafa Katibat, whose headquarters were near Tebessa, was headed by Abu el-Khettab and was the primary target of security forces. It is suspected that the network successfully enlisted several young people, estimated at 60 during the past three years. Oualid Khelfellah was one of a number of Algerians who were already involved in suicide operations in Iraq (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007dq).

In another case involving El-Oued, a 39-year-old Afghan war veteran who was a computer programmer, used internet sites from where he printed leaflets and recorded CDs which he distributed to young people with the intention of persuading them to participate in the war in Iraq. According to security forces, the suspect successfully recruited a 22-year-old relative and a second person aged 23. Both had contacted their families from Iraq (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007dq).

Subsequently on 5 May 2007, nine people aged between 20 and 30 were brought before the state prosecutor in an El-Oued court charged with being members of a terrorist organisation active within and outside the country. Detailed charges included recruitment, financing, incitement to terrorism and the distribution of subversive literature (including audiovisual films,

microcomputers, CDs, flash discs, MP4s and subversive documents produced by *al-Qa'eda*). Among the accused were a university professor, a student, a day worker and an unemployed man. Seven other people implicated in the case were still wanted. Security agencies believed that at least two of these, both university students, had reached Iraq – new recruits for Iraq go through Syria, via Algiers. This was the conclusion drawn from an analysis made from telephone calls between the El-Oued networks and their counterparts in Iraq. According to the same agencies, five young men had already completed their training as suicide bombers in a camp located in a palm grove in the village of S'hine (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2006l). GSPC/AQLIM made use of cyber cafés, mosques and bookstores to make contact with the young unemployed men and students whom the group wished to target (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007dr). However, those involved came from diverse backgrounds, as indicated in the previous paragraph.

Morocco

After his involvement in the 2004 Madrid train bombings, Mohamed Afalah fled to Iraq where he died in a suicide attack on an Iraqi military checkpoint in the Dora neighbourhood of Baghdad in May 2005, while Mohamed Belhaj and Daoud Ouhnane died in Iraq in October or November 2006 (Reuters 2007m). According to information, Ouhnane was in contact with suspected Islamist extremists in Catalonia in 2005 and 2006 (*The Irish Examiner* 2007). Samir Tahtah, also part of the Madrid train bombing network, was already in prison after being convicted of belonging to a Syrian-based network that recruited suicide bombers to attack US troops in Iraq (Dow Jones International News, 2007j).

Salafia Jihadia members in Morocco were also linked with the involvement of Moroccans in Iraq. For example, during investigations into the arrest of a cell in Morocco during August 2005, investigators indicated that Lehasan Ben Mousa, who had been arrested in Morocco, had intended to infiltrate Iraq via Syria. Ben Mousa contacted a friend called Ali El Abidi in Syria to facilitate his journey to Iraq in the company of Izzeddine Nawayili, alias Abu Souhayb, alias Abu Zayd. Ben Mousa admitted that he had travelled from Casablanca to Damascus, where a Jordanian and a Syrian were waiting to meet him. As they had, however, been unable to cross the Syrian border, Nawayili and another person, Ahmet Ait Barhal, went to Turkey and Syria, from where they were able to reach Iraq. But Nawayili returned to Morocco after joining a group in Iraq that asked him to carry out a suicide bombing targeting a Shi'i market. He refused to carry out the attack after he visited the market, claiming that women and children would

be killed. He was deported to Damascus, where the Syrian police arrested him. He returned to Morocco after being released (BBC Monitoring Middle East, 2005c).

In April 2006, Abdelaziz A, while being detained in Morocco, admitted that a Moroccan, identified as Husni, had carried out a suicide bombing in Iraq during 2005 (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2006n).

Two suicide bombers recruited at the Hsida mosque in Tetouan carried out their suicide mission in Baqouba, Iraq, in October 2006 (Thorne 2007). This was in spite of the fact that Moroccan security forces had in 2006 dismantled 11 networks specialising in the recruitment of Moroccans to Iraq. According to the same source, the GICM had sent approximately 40 people to Iraq (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007ds).

On 5 January 2007 Moroccan authorities announced that their security forces had dismantled an Islamist cell specialising in recruiting volunteers for Iraq and had arrested 62 people (*New York Times Abstracts* 2007; Abdennebi and Pfeiffe 2007). On the same date a court in Sale, Morocco, sentenced Ibrahim Samiri to two years' imprisonment after he was arrested in Syria on the border with Iraq (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007dt). Arrests were concentrated in Tetouan and a village close to the border with Ceuta. The majority of the suspects came from the Mezuak district of Tetouan, the same area where five of the Islamist radicals who had taken part in the Madrid train bombings in 2004 had grown up. Among those arrested was Fatala Abdelillah, the imam of the Dawa wa Tabligh mosque in Mezuak, who had previously been arrested on terrorism charges in November 2006 but had subsequently been released (Cembrero 2007a).

Also in January 2007 Moroccan security forces arrested Abdelali Ayad in Chefchaouen, Tetouan. It is alleged that Ayad recruited approximately 40 volunteers to Iraq as part of a terrorist cell established in Tetouan (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007du).

Ahmed Essafri, a Swedish citizen of Moroccan origin, was charged in Rabat on 12 January 2007 with being involved in the recruitment of fighters for Iraq. At the same time, Khaled Oussayeh, a Moroccan-born Belgian, was charged with being a member of the GICM, suspected of involvement in attacks in Casablanca in 2003 and Madrid in 2004, planning terrorist acts and falsifying documents. Oussayeh originally lived in Maaseik, a small town on Belgium's border with the Netherlands, but was extradited to Morocco after being arrested in Syria (AFP 2007u).

On 2 February 2007, Mohamed Ben Moujane, a Moroccan arrested in Afghanistan by Pakistani security forces as an *al-Qa'eda* bodyguard, was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment in Morocco after being handed over by the US, where he had been one of eight Moroccans held at Guantanamo Bay (AFP 2007j).

In November 2007 Iraqi security forces accused Mohsen Khaybar, alias Abdelmajid el-Libi (the Libyan), alias Abderrahim, a Moroccan originally from Tetouan, of being linked to *Ansar al-Islam*, which was responsible for planning terrorist attacks against the Shi'is in Iraq. Khaybar, who was believed to have lived in Damascus, Syria, also led a network involved in the recruitment of fighters for Iraq. Khaybar was considered one of the leading members of the *al-Jama'ah al-Libiyah al-Muqatilah*, or the Libyan Combatant Group, which he joined during his stay in Afghanistan, even though he is a Moroccan – which explains the reference to Libya in his alias. Moroccans arrested in Syria and deported to Morocco during the course of this case had implicated Khaybar (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007dv).

In summary, although the country experienced only sporadic acts of terrorism on its own soil, Moroccans were particularly active both in recruiting foreign fighters for Iraq and in various European terrorist networks.

Tunisia

Tunisians responsible for or implicated in attacks in Iraq included (Vidino 2006:265-266):

- Yusri Fakhir Muhammad Ali al-Turayki, alias Abu-Qadamah al-Tunisi, a Tunisian, had been responsible for attacks on two tombs in Samarra and thereby further fuelling sectarian violence in Iraq. Al-Turayki, who was believed to have entered Iraq in November 2003, was sentenced to death in 2006 for his suspected role in the assassination of journalist Atwar Bahjat and for his involvement in the bombing of the tombs of imams Ali al-Hadi and Al-Hasan al-Askari in Samarra (BBC Monitoring Middle East, 2007dd)
- Nabil Sulaymani, a Tunisian, was arrested in Syria in an attempt to enter Iraq and was deported back to Tunisia (BBC Monitoring Middle East, 2007dd)
- Fadhal Saadi, who had previously been implicated in the preparations for the assassination of Shah Masud in Afghanistan, lived in Milan before becoming a suicide bomber in July 2003

- Kamal Morchidi, a member of the Ben Khemais cell, also lived in Milan before carrying out his suicide attack on the al-Rashid hotel in Baghdad on 26 October 2003, possibly, as earlier indicated, targeting US Deputy Defence Secretary Paul Wolfowitz
- Habib Waddani, alias Said, a Tunisian living in Milan (and also previously referred to), also carried out a suicide attack in Iraq. He was previously wanted for weapons and explosives trafficking for *al-Qa'eda* training camps (Hafez 2007:205-207)
- Lofti Rihani, who was a member of a cell headed by Essid Sami Ben Khemais, died with two other Tunisians in a suicide attack on US forces in September 2003
- Fahdal Nassim, who was implicated in the attack against UN headquarters in Baghdad in August 2003

In December 2006, Turkish authorities arrested Malek Charahili, a Tunisian, and raided the residences of his two accomplices, a Moroccan and a Turk, who were suspected of assisting foreign fighters to enter Iraq through supplying them with false passports. It was believed that after the imprisonment of Syrian Loa'i Mohammad Haj Bakr al-Saqa, who was charged with being the mastermind behind the suicide bombings in Istanbul in 2003 which killed 58 people, Charahili may have become *al-Qa'eda's* top operative in Turkey (Dow Jones International News 2006a).

Egyptian security forces also announced in early January 2007 that four Tunisians – Ayman Hkiri, Ahamed Lahbib, Mhamed Almadiri and an unnamed fourth person – were to be deported to Tunisia after being arrested in the Madinet Nasr district in Cairo and in Alexandria. Nine Tunisians, eight French, two Belgians, one US citizen and a number of Syrians and Egyptians were arrested on suspicion of being part of a cell involved in the recruitment of foreign fighters for Iraq (All Africa 2007).

Abu Osama al-Tunisi, an emir responsible for bringing Sunni fighters to Iraq where he was believed to have been based since 2004, was one of between six and ten *al-Qa'eda* leaders in Iraq believed to have been killed in a US air strike on 25 September 2007. According to the US Central Command: 'Abu Osama al-Tunisi was in the inner leadership circle of Abu Ayyub al-Masri, the leader of *al-Qa'eda* in Iraq, and was a likely successor.' Al-Tunisi was the military emir of Baghdad's southern belt and took over the role of emir of foreign terrorists when al-Masri became the overall leader. Al-Tunisi

helped equip foreign terrorists for improvised explosive device attacks, car-bombing campaigns and suicide attacks throughout Baghdad (US Federal News 2007a)

However, Abu Osama al-Tunisi's fate was not certain. According to *al-Qa'eda*-aligned websites, another commander with a similar name had been killed in 2006, while, according to other sources, another Tunisian with a similar name and also fighting in Iraq might have adopted the name Abu Osama al-Tunisi because it was a famous name (Zavis and Barnes 2007). The impact of transnational terrorism may be summarised in a single statistic, which is that some four-fifths of all the high-profile attacks in Iraq have been carried out by foreign terrorists.

Conclusion

Prior to 9/11, the political freedom that existed in democratic regimes allowed terror organisations and individuals to recruit new members, to propagate their ideals and activities, as well as to organise and launch their operations, including sending Islamists for training in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya and Iraq.

Western Europe was used by a number of these groups (despite being classified in other countries as terrorist groups) to raise funds and publicise their activities. Allowing these groups to function in the so-called safe haven countries of Europe under the cover and protection of civil liberties made these countries themselves vulnerable to terrorism. Consequently many European countries gradually began to experience the devastating impact of international terrorism in much the same way as France and more recently Spain had earlier experienced.

Western European countries have also begun to understand that turning a blind eye to extremists being trained in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya and Iraq will in the end pose a threat not only to these and other more distant countries, but to their own countries as well.

While Europe had been a safe environment for many terrorists who sought political asylum as a way of preventing their extradition to their respective countries of origin, the opposite happened after 9/11, when instead of honouring one of the primary rules of extradition, which is not to extradite a person who might be tortured or unfairly treated, some countries over-reacted in their attempts to rid themselves of current or future threats. Such over-reaction led to allegations of Islamophobia.

In Spain, the government approved the extradition of the two suspects to Morocco in October 2007, while Britain signed agreements with countries with poor human rights records, including Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia.

The first person to be handed over to Algeria was Taleb Benaissa, who was suspected of having ties with Rachid Ramda. Although Benaissa had travelled to Pakistan, he had been in the education profession. British police had arrested him in 2002 and kept him in detention until 2005 without being able to make a successful case against him. Algeria, however, had on 10 November 2007 sentenced Benaissa in absentia to three years' imprisonment. Britain was also expected to hand over another three Algerians (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007dw).

On 18 July 2007 US officials handed Abdallah Ben Amor Hajji over to Tunisian authorities after being held at Guantanamo Bay. In 1995 a military court in Tunisia sentenced him *in absentia* to a 10-year prison term for belonging to a terrorist organization. In particular for his alleged involvement in the Tunisian Islamic Front, a group thought to be the armed branch of the banned Islamist party *an-Nahda*. Hajji moved from Tunis with his family to Pakistan in 1990. Pakistani authorities arrested him in April 2002 and delivered him to the U.S. government, which sent him to Guantanamo. The circumstances in which both Abdallah and Lotfi Lagha were held after being handed over by the United States, despite all the assurances raised a number of questions (Dow Jones International News 2007l).

Subsequently, a US federal judge, citing the mistreatment of Abdallah Ben Amor Hajji and Lotfi Lagha, and blocked the transfer of Mohammed Abdul Rahman, a Tunisian who was captured in Pakistan, despite reassurances from the Tunisian government. Although a military tribunal had heard Rahman's case in 2005 and cleared him for transfer to Tunisia, Rahman had been convicted in absentia in Tunisia and sentenced to 20 years in prison, where he could be tortured (Selsky 2007).

The US Supreme Court also blocked the deportation of Ahmed Belbacha, an Algerian who had been held at Guantanamo Bay since February 2002 following his arrest in Pakistan. This decision probably followed the announcement of Algerian Justice Minister Tayeb Belaiz in October 2007 that Algeria would not accept any conditions for the repatriation of former Guantanamo Bay detainees (AFP 2007v).

It is also interesting to note that while European countries turned a blind eye in the 1990s to European-based support structures run by foreigners wanted

by their countries of origin, or those who abused lax European immigration policies, French authorities dismantled a cell suspected of providing logistical support to the GSPC/AQLIM within a week after the Algiers bombings of 11 December 2007, in which UN offices and the country's constitutional council had been targeted (Verges 2007).

While the network did not plan to target France in its attacks – which was a previous criterion for attention from the security forces – this and other security operations seem to indicate an international commitment to the view that a threat against one is a threat against all. It would be interesting to speculate whether transnational terrorism would have spread as it has if this approach had existed before European countries had had direct experience of violent extremism.

CHAPTER 6

ASSESSMENT OF COUNTER-TERRORISM STRATEGIES

The previous five chapters have provided an overview of the threat of terrorism in the three countries under review, as well as the historical development of terrorism and its regional and international impact. To complete the discussion, this chapter will describe counter-terrorism strategies and their effectiveness in preventing and combating radicalisation as well as terrorism. The success or failure of these strategies will influence current and future challenges and threats.

Political strategies and terrorism

Over the past three decades, the three countries under review have attempted a number of strategies to minimise radicalisation. In one of these strategies, countries committed themselves to political development or at least an intention to open up the political landscape.

After the experience of Algeria in 1991–2, it was to be expected that these countries would be suspicious of parties using religion to mobilise the masses or to justify their claim to power, particularly when this was coupled with a more radical agenda. While total exclusion is out of the question, countries in the Muslim world are increasingly being challenged to find a middle ground between:

- Recognising and allowing religious-based parties to operate and participate in elections as part of a strategy to limit the impact of religious extremism
- Preventing the manipulation of religion to the extent that it will ultimately lead to drastic changes in the political landscape

After the cancellation of the 1992 elections in Algeria – when in order to prevent an FIS victory the military changed the constitution to prohibit the formation of political parties based on religion – Algeria gradually began to open up the political process. Much, however, remains to be done,

particularly in enhancing legitimacy through encouraging and/or improving political participation.

Despite the three reconciliation charters that will be discussed here, former members of armed groups are not allowed to form political parties and are therefore excluded from the political process. This decision was again questioned during 2007 when former members of the AIS, who were disarmed in 1997, asked to be allowed to form a political party. Interior Minister Noureddine Yazid Zerhouni stated: 'Any return to the political scene by officials of the dissolved party is ruled out' (Reuters 2007p). FIS members also expressed their willingness to participate in the local election race through the Movement for the Society of Peace. However, the Movement refused to allow FIS members to join their party out of fear that the interior ministry would strike their names from their electoral lists or would ban these lists altogether (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007dx).

Limiting the influence of religious-based parties has proved to be a favourable strategy in Morocco. While political parties were permitted to formulate their manifestos on religious principles, parties with more radical platforms were prohibited from registering. The government therefore hoped to prevent radical elements from gaining a foothold while not explicitly excluding them from the political process. Unfortunately, the involvement of the recognised Islamist parties in elections is condemned by the radical Islamists, who often accuse these parties of being puppets of corrupt governments whose policies and legitimacy are in conflict with the true principles of Islam. Particularly in the way these governments maintain good relations with Western countries. One therefore wonders if the strategy to strengthen moderate Islamic parties will really be successful as a counter to extreme interpretations, particularly since the Islamist parties which often have a strong following are excluded from the political process (as they also are, for example, in Egypt, which is not part of the present discussion).

The legitimacy of most governments is at the heart of the debate. Despite holding regular elections, the low level of political participation is continuing to raise concern. During 2007 both Morocco and Algeria had elections. Voter turnout in Morocco has fallen from 67 per cent in 1984 and 52 per cent in 2002 to 37 per cent in 2007 (Ghanmi 2007). In the Algeria elections in May 2007 voter turnout was 35 per cent. Both sets of results should be considered as a sign of voter disillusionment, despite claims on the part of political leaders that their countries are on the path of political reform.

Both countries continue to keep a tight control over the religious establishment, but in the case of Morocco the monarchy also controls the political system. Notwithstanding a liberal strategy towards women, King Mohamed VI appoints the prime minister, who in turn chooses government ministers. Parliament has been described as a rubber stamp for the king's initiatives and as a discussion forum, while criticism of the monarchy or its policies is strictly off limits. A complex electoral system means that it is almost impossible for a single political party to be in control of parliament (Carroll 2007a). Notwithstanding questions of legitimacy, the Justice and Development Party, a moderate Islamist party, won 46 seats in the 2007 elections.

In 1992 the Tunisian government banned *an-Nahda*, an extremist political party established to change Tunisia into 'an Islamic country', after a plot to assassinate President Ben Ali was uncovered. Since then a large number of its members have been arrested and detained. According to the International Association for the Support of Political Prisoners, 57 *an-Nahda* members were detained, of whom 22 received presidential pardons on 25 July 2007 (AP 2007I).

While Algeria and Morocco have begun to open up the political landscape, Tunisia still firmly excludes even moderate Islamic political parties from the political process. In the case of Tunisia, as with some other Muslim countries, the fear exists that the government might use the threat of terrorism and extremism as an excuse to limit political participation and/or to crack down on any form of dissent and therefore delay political reforms. Equally, political participation also serves as a double-edged sword, in that although Islamists could claim a moral high ground in opting for a non-violent strategy to win political power legitimately, participation in the political process might also harm these groups by implying that they agree to its rules and therefore recognise the legitimacy of the current political process.

It cannot be denied that the three countries under review have disregarded democratic principles in order to prevent and combat extremism and terrorism – often the first casualty, even in established democracies. In addition to the need to protect citizens from violence and terrorism, serious introspection is needed to question the true motivation behind these policies. In other words, if the possibility exists that policies based on political exclusion is rather based on an inherent need to protect or ensure a hold on power? Notwithstanding the opinion the reader might have, the use or the manipulation of religion for political gain is an unfortunate reality irrespective of the guilty party.

Amnesty and the resurgence of terrorism

On 29 September 2005 the Algerian government proposed a 'Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation' in a referendum to the Algerian people. At the end of the day the charter was supported by 97 per cent in a turnout of 82 per cent (*Factiva* 2006). Since 29 September 2005, however, a number of parties have indicated their reservation and even open hostility towards the proposed strategy of seeking a peaceful solution to the 'Black Period' (starting in 1991), that resulted in the death of an estimated 150 000 people (the precise figure is not known). Although the details of the charter are important, the following discussion will question the practical implications of the charter and the prospects for a sustainable peace.

The 2005 charter was not the first attempt on the part of the government to resolve the conflict. Through the introduction of a reconciliation plan in 1995, President Zeroual initiated the *Rahma*, or clemency law, directed at the AIS. Under this initiative, approximately 2 000 fighters, predominantly from the Mitidja region, laid down their arms. In the same spirit, President Bouteflika initiated the Civil Concord in 1999. This resulted in clemency for approximately 6 000 terrorists (AFP 2005i).

In the same way as the latest 2005 charter, the 1999 concord was directed at Islamist fighters who had not committed violent crimes, such as murder and rape. However, practically all reformed Islamists benefited from the clemency measures, regardless of any crime they had committed.

Although the 2005 charter has also resulted in clemency for approximately 6 000 Islamists, it has not proved to be sufficient since it has not led to real political dialogue on the deeper causes of the crisis or, in turn, to real political integration. Considering that previous repentance initiatives also did not manage to resolve the conflict, it might be advisable to revisit the present conflict-resolution strategy, particularly since, although violence is on a declining trend, the threat, recruitment and impact of radicalisation and terrorism are changing, as discussed in a previous chapter.

From the onset, it was feared that the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation might be faced with the same obstacles as the previous two attempts. In addition to a continuation of attacks – despite the fact that according to government sources between 250 and 300 militants have 'repented' – the victims, support groups and human rights organisations are increasingly confronting the government on the manner in which the charter is implemented. Human rights organisations argue that the charter

was formulated as a result of political considerations rather than in the pursuit of justice and reconciliation. All indications exist that reconciliation between the regime and the terrorists came at the cost of the victims (Lewis 2006). Judging from previous reconciliation processes on the continent, one needs to ask if repentance within the Algerian framework is really repentance. Can the laying down of arms without repenting be classified as reconciliation? And what if the underlying root causes are not being addressed?

The objective of a sound reconciliation process is not to blame the other party for all the wrongs it committed in an attempt to justify own actions, but rather to bring people on both sides of the conflict together in a process of confronting the past and building trust and a lasting peaceful future. In effect, reconciliation is a process in which the past is addressed in order to move to the future through four interrelated components: truth, justice, forgiveness and healing. Reconciliation involves building new relationships between former enemies on the premise of 'respect and real understanding of each other's needs, fears and aspirations [since] the habits and patterns of cooperation that we then develop are the best safeguard against a return of violent division' (Bloomfield 2003). Reconciliation as a process therefore involves the following elements:

- An opportunity to tell the truth
- Reparation
- Restorative justice
- Healing

Reconciliation can therefore only be achieved if the truth is revealed. In other words, the ability to question, speak and reveal. Within the Algerian context, the law implementing the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation proposes up to five years' imprisonment for statements or activities concerning 'the National Tragedy' that 'harms' state institutions, 'the good reputation of its agents' or 'the image of Algeria internationally' (Goldstein 2006).

Further questioning the process of revealing the truth as part of the reconciliation process, the government announced that the names of Islamist terrorists would not be made public, nor would the process that certifies that they have not committed rape or participated in attacks or massacres. The government further indicated that in practice the responsibility for the conflict was solely that of the Islamist terrorists. In other words, the government is avoiding a recognition and acceptance of

responsibility for its part in the conflict – and in particular the numerous disappearances of its ‘enemies’.

Despite the fact that the charter acknowledges the role of the security forces and armed groups, such as the Patriots, in human rights abuses, the government maintains that the security forces and state-armed militias acted in the interests of the country. The government therefore fails to acknowledge that it may have also been responsible for serious crimes as well. Further questioning the government’s resolve not to confront its own role in the conflict came with the discovery of a number of mass graves. Although it was expected that the government would be willing to have the graves exhumed and bodies examined forensically, the opposite has happened (Goldstein 2006).

In addition to the government’s reluctance to accept responsibility, reports by local activists, victims and their families indicated that judicial investigations were not carried out and that some 2 200 former Islamists had been released from jail after *de facto* exemptions from prosecution or without any assessment of whether or not they had committed grave human rights abuses. With reference to the approximately 7 000 people (precise figure not known) who have disappeared, the government has granted a general amnesty to members of the security forces (*Factiva* 2006).

Even leaving aside the question of the implications of the present reconciliation process for victims and their families, the fact that amnesty is traditionally granted after hearings at which the truth comes out puts a question-mark on the Algerian version of a reconciliation process.

In previous reconciliation processes, truth and justice have proved to be more objective when they are recorded collaboratively by both parties affected by an atrocity. Forgiveness and closure are possible only after the victims, or the family of victims, have heard the perpetrator’s full testimony. Amnesty can therefore only be granted on a case-by-case basis, based on the crime committed and after details of the atrocities were revealed.

Although the reconciliation process essentially takes place on an individual level, the government plays an essential role in promoting the process and in providing the necessary instruments to facilitate the process. In the case of Algeria, the government recognises the importance of reconciliation in principle through reference in the title of the charter to ‘peace and national reconciliation’, but there has been no attempt to implement this process in practice. Despite a clear need to confront the past, President Bouteflika

has said: 'Algeria's wounds are still too raw for a truth commission and (...) Algerians yearn to look toward the future' (AFP 2005i).

By 7 January 2007, Algerian Department of Justice had released 2 629 former terrorists who have benefited from the latest amnesty (Winter 2007). Although a number of former fighters made use of the government's reconciliation offer, others returned to the ranks of the GSPC or became involved in crime syndicates. The main reason may have been unemployment and limited re-education – in the same way as in Egypt with reference to *al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya*. These complaints were, for example, summarised in a letter signed by repentants:

From the day we came down [from the mountains] until today, we have not seen any social reintegration or the civil and social rights that we had been promised. We have no jobs, no residence and no passport. If any one of us gets a passport, he will be barred from leaving the country because he came down from the mountain (...) Because our situations became more difficult, some of us managed to get loans while some others, who form the majority, did not succeed. What do we do? Should we beg [for money] at mosques? Or should we commit robbery and theft? You have already heard that the security forces nabbed a group of criminals, including two repentant *jihadists*, in Meftah [in southern Algiers] and you also heard of the robbery against a financial institution in Ber Khadem [southern Algiers suburb] carried out by several persons, including a former Islamist (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007dy).

Despite a need from ordinary Algerians to end the bloody conflict, victims and concerned citizens have reported that individuals who previously made use of the reconciliation process – commonly referred to as 'repentants' – had either returned to violence or had established recruitment or support networks. For example, the suicide bombing in Batna on 6 September 2007 focused attention on the success of the Algerian government's reconciliation efforts. On 20 September 2007, a repentant known as Z Walid was arrested in Batna. According to information, Walid coordinated and assisted in the execution of the attack through helping Haouari Belzrag, the suicide bomber, to reach the city centre from the forests near Tazoult City (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007dz). Walid also recruited four youths from Kchida and six others from Park Afourage to join the insurgency in Iraq through the GSPC/AQLIM (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007ea). Even Larbi Charef who was identified as the suicide bomber in the 11 December attack on the Constitutional Council building was released after he was arrested in 2004 for being part of a logistical support network. After his release in the reconciliation process, Charef left for the mountains to return in the 11 December attacks (Dow

Jones International News 2007c). According to the Algerian government on 7 October 2007, of the 6 000 former combatants who had made use of the reconciliation processes, some 20 had taken up arms again – a figure that is questioned (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007eb).

Exclusion from future political participation not only re-affirms the one-sided approach, but it is also counter-productive for dealing with all concerns. In September 2007, Ali Belhaj was brought before the court for ‘attacking the security of the state, attacking the person of the president, insulting the military institution, and offering an apology for terrorism’ after he had made the following statement:

[T]he military institution should be cleansed of these criminals and killers who comprise it such as the army corps general, as well as those who are in retirement, such as General Toufik, and others even more numerous who should be tried. I am not talking about people, but about those who lead the army, those who were responsible for the young conscripts, who were sent into the mountains to get themselves killed whereas their children are kept warm at home. I am even asking for an investigation into the wealth of these generals (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007ec).

In addition to Algeria, Morocco has also initiated a campaign of royal pardons for model prisoners, that also included individuals previously suspected of being involved in terrorism. Especially in the aftermath of the bombing in Casablanca in 2003, King Mohammed VI pardoned a large number of prisoners during the religious holidays. The case of individuals directly involved in the suicide bombing in March 2007, as well as subsequent arrests, has placed a question-mark on this strategy:

- Abdelfettah Raydi, who was responsible for the suicide bombing on 11 March 2007, had been granted a royal pardon in 2005 – two years into a five-year sentence for his alleged lesser role in the 2003 bombings
- Abdellatif Amrine, jailed in 2003 for his suspected role as reserve bomber in a Casablanca suicide attack, was handed a 30-year prison sentence but released in 2005 due to ill health under a royal pardon for 164 extremists. After the March 2007 bombing, Amrine was re-arrested (Reuters 2007q)
- In March 2007 Moroccan police arrested seven former Islamist prisoners previously given a royal pardon and seized 200 kg of bomb-making material, linked with Abdelfettah Raydi (AFP 2007w)

Essentially, the initiatives presented have provided a platform for discussion. They should, however, not be seen as a stand-alone strategy. In the case of Algeria, it will be important to address the underlying causes of the conflict – with particular reference to political exclusion. Secondly, the process has, as mentioned, blamed only one of the parties to the conflict. Instead, the process should as far as possible be conducted objectively – and, if necessary, with foreign assistance (for example the United Nations). In the case of Morocco, the government resorted to royal pardons in an attempt to counter growing radicalisation among individuals who were not directly involved in the 2003 Casablanca attacks. Unfortunately, the arrest and conviction of individuals who had not been directly involved had placed a question-mark over the security forces and the criminal justice system. This situation will be discussed later in the chapter.

Socio-economic restructuring

Poor socio-economic conditions are not a source of terrorism, but they can create favourable circumstances for the radicalisation of individuals. A number of factors have influenced and contributed to the radicalisation process. In the case of socio-economic conditions, radicalisation takes place predominantly in urban areas where people confronted with poor socio-economic conditions can see no solution and ultimately become desperate and detached.

One might argue that a person with nothing to lose can be more easily influenced than a person who has everything to live for. Table 2 summarises the basic economic challenges. In Algeria an estimated 75 per cent of young

Table 2: Selected socio-economic indicators for Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia

	Algeria	Morocco	Tunisia
Population	32 930 091 (2006)	33 241 259 (2006)	10 175 014 (2006)
Unemployment	22,5% (2005)	10,5% (2005)	13,5% (2005)
Population below the poverty line	25% (2005)	19% (2005)	7,4% (2005)
GDP real growth rate	6% (2005)	1,8% (2005)	4,3% (2005)

Source: CIA World Factbook 2007

people under 30 are unemployed (New Zealand Press Association 2007). In Morocco, on the other hand, it is estimated that of 30 million people, 14 per cent live below the poverty line and over 40 per cent are illiterate.

Suicide bombers who died in the 2003 Casablanca bombings included Mohammed Mhani, Abdelfattah Bouliqdan, Khalid Benmoussa and Adil Taich. However, Mohammed El Omari, a suicide bomber who survived, as well as three who changed their minds at the last minute – Rachid Jalil, Yassine Lahnech and Hassan Taousi (sentenced to death). Of importance in this discussion is that all those who were directly involved in the attacks came from Sidi Moumen, one of Casablanca's slums. Living in indescribably harsh conditions, where illiteracy and unemployment are rife, is also a common denominator for those drawn to crime and narcotics.

However, not all those living in these conditions will turn to extremism. Indeed, many family members condemned the attacks, indicating that additional elements (over and above poor socio-economic conditions) are needed for potential terrorists to be radicalised. It may be important to note that the radicalisation process was often not gradual; instead, reference was made to six months, during which those involved became extremely religious. In summary, poor socio-economic conditions in the slum areas in Casablanca contributed to favourable recruitment conditions in the case of Morocco, summarised in the following 'profile':

(...) people who are likely to be attracted by these movements [*Salafia Jihadia*] are the ones who rebel against bad social and economical conditions; those who have a weak educational background; those who lack religious knowledge; and those who have problems in dealing with the outside world (Rhamen 2005).

During the second anniversary of the Casablanca bombings in May 2005, King Mohammed unveiled a development plan expected to cost one billion dirhams (\$114,3 million) a year (Dick 2005). The development plan intends to develop slums, addressing poor socio-economic conditions as a root cause behind radicalisation.

Notwithstanding this plan, the suicide bombing in Sidi Moumen, Casablanca, in March 2007 reaffirmed the role of poverty and desperation in driving ordinary people to extremism. For example, Abdelfattaf Raydi, the eldest of seven children, is said to have slept on the street to give space to his mother and six siblings in a two by three metre room. Raydi dropped out of school after his father left the family (Abdennebi 2007).

Addressing socio-economic desperation in slum areas, Moroccan authorities in the aftermath of the 2003 Casablanca bombings initiated a process of development. Unfortunately, this is a slow process, but it gathered renewed interest after the March 2007 bombings. A week after the 11 March 2007 incident, the Moroccan government initiated the first phase of demolition – some 120 homes in Douar Skouila. It is estimated that some 2 000 dwellings will be pulled down (AFP 2007x).

Tunisia serves as a success story in countering terrorism through socio-economic development. Recognising that extremism and terrorism are also the products of social and economic conditions, Tunisia has waged a campaign to improve the Tunisian quality of life. Economically, it has been a successful strategy: during the 1990s Tunisia had the most powerful economy in North Africa, with a growth rate of five per cent. It has the highest *per capita* income in North Africa, which is a significant accomplishment for a country without oil resources. The country has high education standards and high home-ownership rates (75 per cent) and is the most computerised country on the continent (with South Africa second) (Versi 2001). In the aftermath of the shooting incidents in December 2006 and January 2007, President Ben Ali reconfirmed his government's commitment to address one of the underlying factors encouraging radicalisation: the high unemployment for the country's youth. In March 2007, President Ben Ali stated: 'The employment of young people, particularly university graduates, will always rank first among our priorities, prompting us to devise further ways and means to create more jobs and enhance private initiative' (Reuters 2007r). Since poor socio-economic conditions did not drive extremism in Tunisia, one can again reach the conclusion that poor socio-economic conditions are not the only reason for, or development the only answer to, radicalisation. An integrated approach founded on individual domestic realities should form the foundation of a counter radicalisation and counter-terrorism strategy.

Education

Tunisia was particularly successful in resorting to education to overcome poverty. It is estimated that 80 per cent of Tunisians are considered to be middle-class citizens with *per capita* incomes of at least US\$3 000. Around 78 per cent of Tunisian families own their own homes. Additionally, the poverty rate decreased from 33 per cent in 1967 to 3,9 per cent in 2006. At the heart of this success is the country's focus on education, particularly science and engineering. As in Morocco's case, Tunisia places such emphasis on equal opportunities for women that the number of female students in 2006 reached

53 per cent in the case of secondary education and 58 per cent in the case of higher education in 2006. In addition, 48 per cent of secondary school teachers are women and 40 per cent of university teachers are women (Anjaiah 2007).

While this progress would have been remarkable for any country, Tunisia's situation may ironically prove favourable for extremists. The reason – described by a security expert with whom the author met during a visit to Tunis in May and June 2007 – is that the primary educational focus is on science and technology, and on 'black and white' facts. This has led to a situation where children and young adults are seldom taught to question. Consequently, when confronted with philosophical questions, they are at a loss, making them extremely susceptible to a world categorised as being 'black and white', religiously 'right and wrong' or 'us versus them'. Ultimately, the defence to radicalisation is not education *per se* (considering that terrorists are often not uneducated), but rather the quality and type of education. While education is essential in assuring a better future, students also need to learn from other disciplines, such as social sciences, history and philosophy, to equip them to be open to other opinions, to argue intellectually and to understand domestic and international realities. Starting not at university level but at pre-school level, understanding diversity will be effective as part of a medium- to long-term strategy in preventing radicalisation and terrorism.

Religious control

Religion had always been a powerful tool in the hands of those who have managed to control it. Throughout history both governments and individuals have been caught in this power trap. Religious justification to rule or to implement policies is common, especially in the Muslim world. Muslim countries firmly oppose the exploitation of Islam for political purposes and its use as a pretext to perpetuate acts of terrorism. However, in an attempt to protect their own rule, such countries often show little respect for other liberties, including freedom of speech and association, and suppress these liberties in their own communities. While Muslim governments adopt legislation to ban the formation of political parties based on religion, the same Muslim countries often use religion, through their control of the religious establishment, to justify their rule and decisions. This is clearly a source of frustration, violence and even of terrorism. It is, however, an unfortunate reality that a mosque or a prayer room can and will be abused to spread messages of violence and hatred simply because they are places where people meet. The Ministry of *Awqaf* (religious endowments) was founded in Muslim countries in an attempt to control the official religious establishment and the message they are delivering.

That ultimately had a number of consequences or questions, such as: what is the true level of control? Where is the control established?

As small groups or prayer groups are beyond the reach of governments, when governments drive small groups of people with extreme opinions underground, they find it difficult to decide on the best strategy. Bringing diverse and extreme opinions into the open might provide an opportunity for religious authorities to engage with and be aware of the local sentiment, but it might also lead to the spread of extreme opinions. On the other hand, restricting the intellectual space might drive extremists underground and lead to further isolation and extremism, but it will also deprive both the religious and the security establishments of the opportunity of being aware of public sentiments.

We noted in the introduction that in the relationship between the government or the state-system and religion, Islamic extremists believe that the establishment of an Islamist system of government is not merely an option but a requirement: governments and individuals who fail to follow Islamic law are not regarded as being Muslim, which provides sufficient grounds for a legitimate *jihad*. Opposition to illegitimate governments also extends to the official religious establishments that are 'used' to legitimate government policies and actions.

To rectify this state of affairs, extremists began to call on Muslims to reject the established religious authority, with the result that governments (which are often regarded as illegitimate) control the religious establishment primarily for the following political reasons:

- To provide credibility or legitimacy to the government
- To excuse the behaviour of the government
- As a strategy to counter religious opposition from the local community

To limit criticism on the assumption that the official religious authority will not issue statements contradicting the government for fear of being replaced; and therefore limiting the possibility of objectivity and representation.

These factors should be taken into consideration in the following discussion dealing with the relationship between mosques and politics. Originally the role of the mosque in the traditional Muslim society is twofold. The first and primary role relates to worship, and second relates to other social activities in creating a sense of community.

But why do governments consider it necessary to control religious activities directly or indirectly by controlling mosques or the official religious establishment? The answer is that mosques traditionally are the centre for community activities and ideas. Controlling or monitoring activities at local mosques is thus an important political and strategic security strategy for a number of governments, especially if their legitimacy is being questioned. On the other hand, Islamic revivalism and Islamist extremists make use of mosques as centres for their activities, spreading ideas across all segments of society. Islamists realised the value of mosques as places where they can express their political and ideological interpretation and as places in which to recruit new followers. In theory, registered mosques are under the strict control of the government and are prohibited from being used for anti-government or extremist ideology. Although the majority observe this ban, the unfortunate situation is that mosques continue to be used. This is especially so in the case of private mosques in politically vibrant areas.

In Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, the influence over the *ulama* – the official religious establishment – is also restricted through the restructuring of state institutions, new programmes and control over their financial resources. The aim of this strategy is to reduce any potential opposition, including criticism, through the establishment of a Ministry of Religious Endowments and Islamic Affairs. This ministry also controls the functioning and operation of state mosques, it appoints and pays personnel. Although the construction of private mosques is allowed, all sermons and speeches are carefully monitored by civil servants (Shahin 1997:51).

As an important consequence of state involvement in religious affairs, the *ulama* gradually began to lose their influence at local level in representing the opinions of particularly the younger generation, especially on hard issues such as domestic political challenges, the ‘war on terrorism’ and Iraq. As the *ulama* came to be regarded as an extension of government control, a void was created for extremist elements as the *ulama*’s more moderate approach may present a different message, often reflecting public sentiment. As Muslim communities are being divided between moderates and extremists, or older and younger generations, conflict becomes directed against both the religious establishment and the political authority. Possible political or secular ‘conflict’ is thus transformed into a religious struggle with political consequences.

In the aftermath of the 8 September 2007 suicide attack in Dellys it became apparent that mosques in Bab El-Oued in Algiers were infiltrated by extremist elements. For example, Sheikh Amine, of the El Ouafa Bil Ahd

mosque in Kouba, Algiers, was arrested after a number of young people who surrendered to the authorities implicated Sheikh Amine as having encouraged them to join the ranks of GSPC/AQLIM and to participate in the insurgency in Iraq. Sheikh Amine was also implicated as the person responsible for radicalising Nabil Belkacemi and the 15 suicide bombers in the Dellys attack. According to family members – and even then in retrospect – the radicalisation of Belkacemi took place over a period of five months. In addition to the Appreval mosque, the Ettahdhib mosque in Mostaganem was also indicted during the same period for delivering an extreme interpretation of Islam (BBC Monitoring Middle East, 2007ed). In addition to the radicalisation of young people, Sheikh Amine was also implicated in the radicalisation of three of the four suicide bombers involved in the attacks on 11 April and July, including Merouane Boudina alias Maad Benjabel (involved in the 11 April attacks), all three from the Bachdjarah and Bourouba neighbourhoods regularly attended the Appreval mosque (BBC Monitoring Middle East, 2007ee).

Subsequent investigations revealed that in addition to the message delivered at a few mosques in the city, approximately 15 unauthorised prayer rooms were operational in Algiers. Religious Affairs Minister Ghlamallah gave the following explanation:

A prayer room is a place designed to welcome people to say prayers. When a neighbourhood or a municipality lacks a mosque, and solely in that case, we allow a prayer room to be opened so as not to penalise residents. But beforehand the permission of the province's religious affairs directorate must be obtained.

Although the state has appointed 300 inspectors to monitor activities at official mosques, the fact that there are 14 500 mosques in Algeria makes it doubtful that the religious affairs ministry could claim that it has control over the situation (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007ef). On 7 November 2007, in an attempt to counter radicalisation at mosques, this ministry proposed an 'anti-suicide bomber' programme. According to this programme, all religious and cultural institutions need to be mobilised as 'relay stations' to listen to the preoccupations of the youth (BBC Monitoring Middle East, 2007eg).

Although a number of elements influenced the isolated suicide incidents during 2007 in Morocco, these incidents may have been limited to individuals radicalised in small groups and predominantly influenced by the internet, mass media and the war in Iraq. On the other hand, the Casablanca

bombings of 2003 reaffirmed that through unofficial mosques in slums and poor neighbourhoods, where high unemployment and despair among the young are common, radical preachers have access to an audience that can be manipulated. Before the Casablanca bombings, the Moroccan authorities had initiated a campaign to shut down unauthorised mosques and to ban bookshops, tapes and CDs propagating an extreme interpretation of Islam. Notwithstanding these measures, the Moroccan government was not able to prevent the 2003 suicide attacks, and it may indeed even have helped to provoke them. Ultimately the question remains: does the official religious establishment represent ordinary people, particularly the younger generation, or are they regarded as being out of touch with reality?

Further empathising with the notion of modernisation, the Moroccan government initiated a campaign in which women have been given new responsibilities in mosques, in the form of principally religious teaching on the lines of female imams (*murchidates*). This initiative, which was introduced after the 2003 bombings and in response to Salafist extremism, has the full support of the Justice and Development Party, which would like to see the number of *murchidates* increased from 50 to 200 (Kristianasen 2007). Although more directed at female followers, the impact of this initiative is unclear, or at least it is too early to analyse its impact.

Counter-terrorism investigations and the spread of radicalisation

Countries in the region realise the importance of a holistic strategy to prevent and combat terrorism. It is equally important to decide on the most viable strategy based on an analysis of the threat. For example, during the 1990s and until the GSPC began to lose massive public support – when fully functioning insurgent structures were operational – the military apparatus proved most successful in an almost conventional military approach. This strategy included intense bombing of, for example, forested areas. As part of this strategy, large areas are cordoned off, bombed and searched. Although this approach still continues when groups of terrorists have been spotted, the role of intelligence and the police in dealing with small cells and support structures in an urban environment is crucial.

Most challenging is that new operatives are young with no previous criminal record or alignment to terrorist groups. Nevertheless, the Algerian security forces had a number of successes during the course of 2007. For example in the aftermath of the attacks on 11 April 2007, security forces arrested Al-Zubair Abu-Sajidah, one of the would-be suicide bombers, who in turn

identified two other suspects who were arrested four days later. These two had participated directly in preparing and carrying out the attacks that targeted the prime minister's office and a police station in Bab el-Zouar. Although the identity of the suspects were not released, security forces indicated that one of those arrested was the brother of a terrorist killed in the operation in which Sayid Ali Rachide, alias Ali Dix, the military adviser to Abdelmalek Droukdel and the mastermind behind the 11 April and 11 July suicide attacks in Algiers and Lakhdaria, and his assistant, Nour Mohamed, alias Haroune El-Esh'ashi, were eliminated. The investigations also revealed that B Ali, who supplied members of GSPC/AQLIM with money to buy a Toyota truck, headed the cell. The truck was used in the Lakhdaria attack after it had been booby-trapped (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007eh).

Notwithstanding the fact that the extent of Algeria's counter-terrorism strategy cannot be fully analysed, it is understandable that Algeria's experience with terrorism is very different from that of the other countries under review. Essentially, Algeria's experience provides valuable lessons. Initially, as explained by Prime Minister Ouyahia on 21 January 1998, the primary objective of the government's campaign against terrorism under the state of emergency was to 'fight, resist and eradicate terrorist groups on the ground, and to protect economic installations, administrative buildings and citizens throughout the country' (BBC Monitoring the Middle East 1998a).

According to Algerian officials, the country's broad counter-terrorism strategy was aimed at achieving four main objectives:

- Mobilising the population against terrorist groups through sensitisation and information
- Countering the formation of formal as well as informal support networks
- Getting terrorists away from cities and urban centres
- Confining terrorists to uninhabited areas and neutralising them

Tactical implementation consisted of:

- Securing the urban area and its surroundings by intensifying enquiries with the assistance of the Patriots
- Enhancing cooperation among the security forces, the gendarmerie, the military units of the ANP, and the Patriots

- Protecting social, economic and cultural structures by setting up specific regulations, including the possibility of bringing in private security and district watch bodies
- Securing rural and isolated populations through the creation of self-defence groups working in coordination with proximity police and deployed military units
- Exerting constant pressure on terrorist groups by carrying out intelligence and search and destroy operations

Reference to the role of the public as one of the primary role-players in an effective counter-terrorism strategy is an essential lesson learned from the Algerian experience. Although confronted by a very different reality, excluding the public as a valuable resource and source of information would be a mistake since it would deprive security forces of access to local knowledge. In the Algerian case, the Patriots, who represented the locals, proved to be efficient in knowing the territory and locals. While it is easier to establish access in rural areas with the assistance of local resolve, intelligence-driven operations in cosmopolitan cities are more challenging when radicalisation takes place on an individual level around people not always interested in the lives of their neighbours. Since then, terrorist activities have substantially decreased and the terrorists have had to change their tactics by resorting to indiscriminate suicide bombings – and the public have again been called on to help deal with this threat.

Mass arrests

Historically, mass arrest campaigns have proved counter-productive. Kepel (2003:258) summarises the impact that massive imprisonment had on radicalisation in the early period of the conflict in Algeria. In an attempt to deal with growing radicalisation, the Algerian military 'arrested more than 40 000 people and sent them to camps deep in the Sahara. For a while the military seemed to have the situation under control, but before long this massive relocation had an unforeseen consequence. The sympathisers and militants who had been removed and concentrated became much more radical while in custody, and by the time they were released (beginning in the summer of 1992) they were willing recruits for the armed insurgent groups'.

Although a similar trend was detected in Morocco after the Casablanca bombings, prosecuting and convicting the right people – and dealing with them so that they will turn away from extremism and influence others in the

same way – remains a challenge, especially for the three countries under review. Despite the tragic bombings in Casablanca in May 2003, Morocco's counter-terrorism operations, and particularly its mass arrest campaign, proved to be a source of serious concern. In particular:

- Moroccan courts have charged 2 112 suspected radical Islamists under anti-terrorism laws with terrorist activity since the 16 May 2003 bombings in Casablanca
- Of this number, no fewer than 1 126 were associated with the bombings
- Of this number, more than 80 per cent, or 903, received sentences, with a total of 17 death sentences being handed down (AFP 2004h)

Charges often included: 'forming a criminal gang in order to prepare for and carry out terrorist acts'; 'being a member of a non-recognised association'; 'holding public gatherings without authorisation'; 'attacking sacred values'. In addition, Morocco's expenditure on security has increased by 23 per cent, with the aim of increasing the recruitment of security officials, raising salaries and purchasing new equipment and premises (AFP 2004i).

According to a report by the DGED, Morocco's secret service, approximately 2 000 'terrorist elements' are under surveillance in Morocco. This suggests that Islamist rebels still pose a threat to the kingdom. A study by the DST – the country's territorial surveillance directorate – published in the *Al Ahdath al-Maghribia* newspaper confirmed that some 2 000 suspects were under constant surveillance while another 1 000 were in jail. The study showed that a majority of those under surveillance had similar social backgrounds to those of the Casablanca bombers, with 13 per cent unemployed and the rest doing odd jobs. Most of them lived in Casablanca, Fez, Rabat and Tangiers (Reuters 2004e).

Surveillance and repressive measures kept extremist groups divided so that although these might have been successful in preventing the formation of a unified organisation, they contributed to the formation of smaller cell structures that are more difficult to infiltrate and monitor. Since 2003, as discussed in an earlier chapter, the Moroccan security forces identified a number of *ad hoc* structures and threats, supporting the theory that mass arrests and a closed judicial system may contribute to the detention of a growing number of people.

In addition to the arrest of a number of members of organised cells, arrests of individuals were still constantly being made. The security forces seldom

reveal any information about their arrests of individuals. Perhaps the only key is that individuals usually receive short sentences. For example:

- Mohamed Abartikh and Hamid Kachkouch, both from Meknes, were sentenced to two years each after being found guilty in Sale on 27 July 2007 of 'forming a criminal gang to plan and carry out terror acts; participating in an unlicensed group; and holding public meetings without prior consent' (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007ei)
- Alaa Mortazak, from Casablanca, also received a two-year sentence at the same hearing after being found guilty of 'forming a criminal gang to plan and carry out terror acts; participating in an unlicensed group; and holding public meetings without prior consent' (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007ei)
- Brahim Skakri, who was born in Casablanca, was sentenced to three years' imprisonment after being found guilty of 'forming a criminal gang in order to prepare for and carry out terrorist acts aimed at harming public order; carrying out activities within a non-recognised association; and holding non-authorised public gatherings'. He was also condemned for his involvement in the attacks in Casablanca on 16 May 2003 (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007ej)
- Khalid Belkhat (21), alias Abu Hanifa, who was arrested in January 2007, was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for 'forming a criminal gang in order to prepare for and carry out terrorist acts; carrying out activities within a non-recognised association; and holding non-authorised public gatherings' (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007ej)
- In December 2007, the anti-terrorism court in Sale sentenced 15 people in three separate cases to between one and four years in jail. Seven of these, who were convicted in connection with the May 2003 bombings in Casablanca, were sentenced to one or two years' imprisonment. Although the reasons were not known, the fact that seven suspects were convicted in relation to a crime that had occurred four years before may be of some concern. In a separate case, seven people were each sentenced to four years in jail for planning to receive military training before participating in the war in Iraq. The 15th person, a Moroccan extradited from Algeria, was sentenced to two years' imprisonment (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007ek)

Unfortunately, radicalisation takes place in prison, and someone prosecuted for a relatively minor offence seldom returns as the same person. This trend

is however not limited to extremists, but also include the radicalisation of individuals incarcerated for normal criminal offences. As a result of overcrowded prison conditions, only a small number of countries are able and equipped to separate individuals with extreme ideas from the broader prison population. Subsequently extremists while in prison often convert criminals or further radicalise those individuals implicated in being involved in lesser terrorism-related offences. It should also be noted that this is not a new trend.

Notwithstanding statements from Moroccan security forces that the suicide bombings of March and April 2007 had been isolated incidents, some 51 people had been arrested by 8 November 2007 for their alleged involvement in these bombings. Most of those arrested had no links with the perpetrators – who were referred to as members of the Abdelfettah Raydi group, a *Salafia Jihadia* cell, from Casablanca, Mohammedia, El Gara, Kenitra and Agadir (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007e).

In Tunisia, the human rights league claimed that approximately 1 000 Tunisians were arrested on charges of violating the country's anti-terror law between its adoption in 2003 and September 2007 (AFP 2007k). Amnesty International accused Tunisia of cracking down too hard on legitimate political dissent. Prior to 9/11 and the renewed international commitment to combat terrorism, Amnesty International accused the Tunisian government of imprisoning some 2 000 people 'who had dared to speak out'. This organisation's statement alleged that 'various forms of harassment' were being used 'to punish, intimidate and silence political opponents, government critics, journalists and others'. The government did not deny that wiretapping was widespread and that there had been arrests, but it said that dissidents in prison were preaching hate, which in Tunisia is a crime equal to terrorism (Kole 1996).

According to Amnesty International's 2004 report, Tunisia's new anti-terrorism legislation contains a very broad definition of 'terrorism', leaving it open to wide interpretation, which could further undermine human rights. There was concern that the exercise of the right to freedom of expression could be considered an act of 'terrorism' and therefore lead to long sentences after unfair trials. The law allows for the extension for an undefined period of pre-trial detention, and lacks safeguards in relation to people facing extradition to countries where they could face serious human rights violations.

Existing provisions of Tunisian legislation on terrorism, especially Article 123 of the Military Justice Code and Article 52 of the Penal Code, have been used

to criminalise peaceful opposition activities. One case was the arrest of 30 suspected members of the Tunisian Youth for Unity and Jihad, which claimed responsibility for the clashes with security forces on 23 December 2006 and 3 January 2007 (Reuters 2007s). In another case, a Tunisian court on 24 January 2007 convicted eight Tunisians on terrorism-related charges (Dow Jones International News 2007m):

- Six of the men were convicted of attempting to join a terror group and recruiting for the group on Tunisian soil. The court handed down five-year sentences to four of the men, a seven-year sentence to another and nine years in prison to another
- The prosecution alleged that the men – from the region of Bizerte, 70 km north of Tunis – were planning to travel to neighbouring Algeria to join the GSPC
- Another man, from the border town of Ghardimaou, was convicted of smuggling people into Algeria. The man acknowledged that he had helped people cross the border illegally, but said he had no ties with the GSPC. He was given the lightest sentence of four years imprisonment
- In a separate case, the court sentenced another man to seven years in prison on charges of financing terrorism. The man acknowledged that he gave a friend 60 dinars, but said he didn't know the friend was planning to travel to Algeria to join the GSPC

Balancing the threat of terrorism and counter-terrorism initiatives and strategies is very delicate – particularly as a 'wrong' counter-terrorism strategy can ultimately lead to further radicalisation and terrorism.

Alliance with non-state actors in countering terrorism – Tuareg

In countering the growing influence of GSPC/AQLIM, the Algerian government has found an unexpected ally in the form of the Tuareg in Mali and Niger. Despite the assistance, analysts questioned whether a possible alignment with the Tuareg will be possible, especially considering the growing spread of Wahabbi influence from Saudi Arabia and clerics from Pakistan, in addition to the Tuareg's alignment with criminal networks and acts of violence directed at the Mali and Niger governments. Ultimately in supporting non-state actors, the Algerian government might end up undermining the authority of the governments of Mali and Niger.

Notwithstanding these allegations, Tuareg rebels have clashed with the GSPC in the Mali desert on a number of occasions in the past few years – considering them as an enemy that attracts unnecessary attention to their smuggling networks. As a result of growing tension, the Algerian government decided to act as a mediator in July 2006. Unfortunately, despite the official agreement mediated by Algeria, tensions between the Tuareg, also known as *Azawad*, and the Mali government escalated. Complicating the situation is the fact that during 2007 the Tuareg stepped up their attacks against government forces from the mountainous Adrar des Iforas region north of Kidal in Mali and from Agadez in Niger. Ibrahim Ag Bahanga, the leader of the Tuareg in Mali, launched attacks against military positions in Tinzaouaten (BBC Monitoring Africa 2007a).

In Niger, the Niger Movement for Justice attacked the town of Iferouane near Agadez in February in a new campaign of violence. At the heart of the conflict has been the Tuareg's demand for a fair share of the country's uranium reserves. In Mali, fighters loyal to Ibrahima Bahanga, a former member of Democratic Alliance for Change, abducted about 20 soldiers in a remote town near the Niger border in late August, which proved to be the first of a series of attacks on military targets. In September the fighters shot at a US military cargo plane which was re-supplying Malian soldiers in Tinzaouatene (Reuters 2007t).

Despite the practical role, these rebel movements could play a positive role in countering the influence of GSPC/AQLIM. For a state to negotiate and equip a rebel group in a neighbouring state could be legally problematical, as previously experienced in the extradition of Saifi Amari, alias Abderrezak El Para, from Chad. While the Movement for Democracy and Justice in Chad (MDJT) captured El Para, the Algerian government refused to negotiate directly with the MDJT in respect of international law. Subsequently Libya acted as mediator. Before the arrest of Abderrezak El Para, the MDJT had also captured Bilal and Mustapha, alias Nouredien Griga, whom they handed over to Libya, which refused to deport them to Algeria (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2004i).

In September 2006, the Tuareg also clashed with the GSPC near the Algerian border, killing a senior commander close to Mokhtar Belmokhtar. This clash was a revenge attack after a clash between the GSPC and the Tuareg near the village of Arouan, 150 km from Kidal (Tattersall 2006).

Further enhancing an alignment with the Tuareg rebels in Mali, special police units to combat terrorism and weapons trafficking are allegedly being formed. Algeria further helped establish a camp in Kidal, where approximately 3 000

Tuareg troops will undergo training. This agreement forms part of a peace deal between the Tuareg and the Malian government that was mediated by Algeria before hostilities resumed in 2007 between Tuareg rebels and the governments of Mali and Niger (AP 2007e).

In addition to the Tuareg in Mali and Niger and the MDJT in Chad, the Polisario Front, based in Tindouf in southwest Algeria, serves as another example of the possible role of non-state actors in combating terrorism. The Western Sahara situation (Polisario Front) proved to be a stumbling block in relations between the Moroccan and Algerian governments. Building on existing terrorism sentiments, the Moroccan government accused the Polisario of having links with *al-Qa'eda*, an allegation vigorously denied by members of the Polisario Front interviewed by the author during a visit to Tindouf in May 2007. Rejecting claims from Morocco, they asked for one example of a member of the Polisario Front or an individual from the Western Sahara having been involved in an *al-Qa'eda* operation – comparing its situation with the many cases in which Moroccans had been implicated in *al-Qa'eda* operations.

An essential component of all these examples is the question of control over territories by the particular governments mentioned. All countries in the region are surrounded by vague and sometimes non-existent borders, nomadic caravan routes and the inability of governments to control movements across their borders. Introducing mobile training camps and other possible alternatives sounds more acceptable and is a topic increasingly being debated.

Cooperation between countries

The growing threat of transnational terrorism in the region requires states to cooperate in preventing and combating terrorism. Unfortunately the reality is more challenging than dealing with a common enemy. Despite good relationships between Algeria and Tunisia, relations between Algeria and Morocco are more challenging, to the extent that during a meeting in April 2007 Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya adopted a new system of coordination among their intelligence agencies, thus sidestepping bilateral political differences that challenged security cooperation.

The meeting of practitioners included: Ali Tounsi, the general director of security in Algeria; Chergui Drais, from Morocco; Abdessatar Benour, the director general of security in Tunisia; Nasir al-Mabruk Abdallah, the secretary of the People's Committee for Public Security in Libya; and Muhammad

Ould Sheikh Mohamed Ahmed, the director of security in Mauritania (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007em).

During an Interpol meeting in Marrakesh in November 2007 it was decided that security coordination between Morocco and Algeria would be conducted through the Interpol central offices in the two countries (BBC Monitoring Middle East 2007en). Despite the fact that Algeria and Morocco continued to work together on security related issues (particularly on a tactical level) – despite the political challenges between the two countries – this initiative was seen as an additional proposal to strengthen cooperation.

Conclusion

In summary, counter-terrorism is high on the agenda of all three countries. How to deal with a growing, if not new threat, introduces a number of challenges. Notwithstanding the short-term need to address the immediate threat, the three countries under review – no less than other countries throughout the world – need to develop and implement medium- to long-term strategies, particularly addressing the root causes of terrorism and radicalisation. Compared with Algeria, whose economy is visibly growing, Morocco and Tunisia are at a different level of socio-economic development. Notwithstanding this, all three countries need to revisit the need for constructive political reform, as well as building a stronger relationship, based on trust, between the state and its people.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The historical development – and particularly the underlying factors influencing their development – of the fundamentalist and extremist organisations in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia reflect similar trends:

- The risk of political violence and terrorism is greater in countries where the political system is perceived as illegitimate, corrupt and removed from the ordinary citizen. Of special importance is the inability to transfer political power through an acceptable political process. Freedom within the political process is also a reflection of the level of activities political opponents are ‘allowed’ to operate, without the involvement of the governing political party or the security forces. Equally citizens should be aware and respect the responsibilities that accompany basic freedoms associated with civil liberties and democracy. Without developing a culture of respecting the same basic freedoms of the other members of society, democratic principles will only be abused – leading to another negative. The sudden opening up of the political landscape in Algeria before the 1991 elections serve as an example to this effect
- In addition to political legitimacy, the type of education can also influence radicalisation. In all three countries the main motivation could be summarised as a deep devotion to a political, social or religious cause. When freedom of expression and other civil liberties are protected, there are non-violent ways to express this devotion. Unfortunately, civil liberties are often the first casualty in the fight against terrorism, which is ironic considering the argument that an absence of civil liberties seems to be a main cause of terrorism – and particularly domestic terrorism – around the world. Democratic governments are more lenient towards dissent than are totalitarian or autocratic regimes, accepting it as part of the political process. However, dissent might be more likely in authoritarian countries although governments generally close other avenues to legitimate opposition. Therefore dissent, including terrorism, is more likely to be directed against authoritarian regimes that repress or restrict opposition and official representation, than it is against democratic regimes. Violence might not always be directed from within

the country but, as a result of driving people to leave the country, be directed from outside the country

- When young people, especially, are not allowed to express their opinions they are likely to be more vulnerable to the radicalisation process. This radicalisation is clearly visible in the growing conservatism of the youth, which leads to a greater susceptibility to ideologies such as Salafism
- International challenges and developments range from the Iranian revolution – which provided the hope of replacing a tyrant with an Islamic government and a framework of reference to Islamist groups all over the world as a counter to Western democracy and Marxism – to the impact of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, which has ideologically influenced all the organisations referred to in this monograph – and the influence of the growing strength of Israel in the region, including the earlier decision of Israel to stay in Lebanon and unresolved Palestinian conflict
- In the same way as the Iranian revolution, the success of the Afghan *Mujahideen* against the Soviet Union gave pride to Islamist movements, which used this experience as a framework of reference for replacing current un-Islamic leaders with true Islamic governments. More recently, the second Gulf war and the invasion of Afghanistan and Somalia (in addition to the unresolved Palestinian question) further encouraged the spread of frustration and radicalisation, and provided extremist organisations with a new international philosophy beyond earlier domestic challenges. These causes are also referred to and used in justifying the need for Muslims to avenge the ‘war on terrorism’ as a ‘war on Islam’ in their frame of reference
- Algeria, and to a lesser extent Morocco and Tunisia, experienced the impact of the war in Afghanistan and the return of the Afghan *Mujahideen*. Afghanistan provided both a training ground to gain experience and a common purpose to extremists throughout the world. Although Europe to a greater extent experienced the impact of the conflict in Chechnya and Bosnia – when the conflict in Algeria was at its height – the renewed war in Iraq will provide a similar experience
- An identity crisis – felt particularly by the younger generation – and the realisation that Western systems do not address domestic and international challenges, led to growing calls for a return to the principles of Islam. These brought communities in conflict with governments, which perceived these calls as a threat to their authority. Consequently, states

often provided their own interpretations of religion and regulated their religious establishments

- Where socio-economic challenges led to the introduction of Marxism – which was considered to be un-Islamic – a firm foothold was offered for Islamic values

Despite the combination of factors listed in influencing extremism, including radicalisation and terrorism, over a long period of time, it is essential to be aware that a country's domestic circumstances have always provided the primary influence in the development of extremism in that country. Without domestic causes, international contributory factors will influence individuals only with difficulty.

Notwithstanding the similarities a number of differences were also identified between the three countries: The most important of these is the fact that all three countries have different political systems. The Algerian system, for example, was the most vulnerable of the three, as in Morocco most groups did not question the religious authority and legitimacy of the monarchy, and in Tunisia there was an autocratic state that did not allow any form of dissent.

All three countries also reacted differently when the state and its security forces were confronted with extremism and terrorism. Algeria initiated a carrot-and-stick approach, offering amnesty and reconciliation, while those not willing to accept it, were killed or prosecuted; however, the magnitude of its problems make it difficult to compare Algeria with the other countries in the region. Tunisia initiated a dual strategy: while addressing one of the underlying factors, namely poor socio-economic conditions, the government prosecuted those implicated in any form of instability by introducing what most people would call a police state. Morocco, on the other hand, under the leadership of King Hassan II, initiated a love-hate relationship by making use of extremist groups when convenient but not allowing them to strengthen their roles. They were tolerated as long as they stayed within the framework of the rules, namely, not to question the authority of the king, not to question the official Islam religious authority and to support Morocco's authority over the Western Sahara. King Mohammed VI also had a dual plan. On one hand he was prepared to address the housing need and to clear the slums, while on the other hand he was determined to destroy groups suspected of being involved in undermining activities, extremism and terrorism.

Despite the differences, none of the countries was willing to address one of the more important contributing factors, which was the introduction of

an open and fair political landscape. The 'health of the political system' also influenced the reaction of the particular state. The more vulnerable the state, the more inclined it was to introduce harsh counter measures. Governments were also willing to use Islamist groups to their advantage, for example, during liberation to consolidate support or to counter the spread of leftist policies, while disregarding and marginaling them when they are not 'needed' or when they are not considered to be a threat to the political authority.

With the GSPC/AQLIM alliance losing tremendous support among the older generation and even among some of its former public supporters, another split might be on the table – with a new organisation emerging to target a new audience with a new focus. Although this new development may represent an act of weakness in the realisation that the state has strengthened its position compared with the early 1990s, the fact is that the vision has indeed changed. With the war in Iraq and the conflict in Palestine continuing – not to speak of future crises that may be able to be manipulated – former domestic groups such as the GSPC will continue to move towards transnational organisations, incorporating their strategy, *modus operandi* and focus. Recruitment propaganda will still rely on twin perceptions that the war on terrorism is a war on Islam, and that the only way to be politically heard is through violence. Growing Islamophobia, strengthened by the perception that the war on terrorism is a war on Islam, is further making it extremely difficult for ordinary Muslims not to be caught in Islamists propaganda and the need to defend their religion against a perceived Christian onslaught.

As a result, these and other groups will continue to grow – even if not in the same way as the terror organisations of the past. For this reason, these groups may become more dangerous. In contrast to the revolutionary organisations that needed public support to exist, the modern *jihadi* organisations exist according to their ability to attract attention. Essentially, the new groups will try to capitalise on the perception that *al-Qa'eda* has the monopoly on terrorism. The primary targets of the new groups will therefore be their own domestic governments and the institutions of these governments. On the other hand, states can make use of the *al-Qa'eda* branding to attract more public support. By using the *al-Qa'eda* card, states can divert attention from the underlying reasons for the resort to terrorism. They can also secure international support by using the war on terrorism to further reduce civil liberties and human rights in order to achieve valuable information and control in their countries.

It is remarkable to note the extensive interest and focus on measures to counter the financing of terrorism. Despite a few examples in which terrorists

have used legal financial structures to fund their operations, most cells still operate independently, which means that they are responsible for their own funding. Thus the line between crime and terrorism becomes blurred – giving more relevance to the examples in Chapter 5, which illustrated some of the scams, drug trafficking and common criminal activities that were used to fund the operations of the different cells and organisations.

While not implying that *al-Qa'eda* does not represent a serious threat to transnational security, we should also be on our guard not to give *al-Qa'eda* more power than it deserves by placing the blame for all acts of terrorism around the world exclusively on *al-Qa'eda*. Although the *al-Qa'eda* brand is being used to justify, gain support and influence, Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri are no longer sanctioning these attacks. Claiming responsibility should rather be seen as a need to stay relevant. As long as the focus is on *al-Qa'eda*, domestic root causes will not be addressed. It is only when sub-regional realities are focused on in depth that workable solutions will be able to be implemented.

Returning to a number of alarming trends that deserve attention:

- The development of small cells, sometimes limited to families, means that cells may become more difficult to infiltrate and to monitor than the previously more structured organisations. This is particularly the case in countries such as Morocco and Tunisia, where there is no easily identifiable or recognisable organisation driving the extremist agenda. As a result of this diversity, a culture may develop in these countries for individuals and smaller organisations to become the driving force of the extremist agenda. Such a development will make it more difficult for security forces to monitor and act against extremists. It may also mean that security forces may spread their net too wide in the knowledge that a real threat, however poorly defined, does exist. This can lead to the arrest and prosecution of individuals who are, at worst, only remotely involved. Although such a strategy may give an immediate impression of strength, it could ultimately – on the basis that radicalisation predominantly takes place in prisons – contribute to the vulnerability of the state
- It is almost impossible to profile a suicide bomber. While there may be some commonalities, we need to recognise the importance of human nature, individual personalities and circumstances. Instead of oversimplifying terrorism, we should accept that the reasons individuals resort to violence against others are complex. Only by understanding these complexities, can an effective counter terrorism strategy be developed

- Multiple levels of society are being targeted:
 - Hopeless as well as well-established individuals
 - Educated individuals (even a university professor was arrested as part of an Iraqi recruitment network)
 - The use of drug addicts: there has been an increasing use of narcotics in the region as countries such as Morocco and Algeria have more domestic users and fewer transit dealers targeting countries in Europe. In other words, the need to redeem oneself provides another motive used by extremists to radicalise former drug addicts. Broadening the argument, extremists will use any individual flaws – which will differ from person to person – in their radicalisation programmes

In aligning themselves with *al-Qa'eda*, groups and individuals are revealing another trend, which is that those who have been traditionally motivated by domestic causes and grievances are increasingly aligning themselves with transnational terror networks and principles – often as a matter of survival. During 2007 both the GSPC in Algeria and the LFG in Libya aligned themselves officially with *al-Qa'eda*. One might argue that both groups realised that the initial strategy of changing the political system and replacing it with a true Islam government could not be realised and that, in order to justify their existence, both groups had to adapt to a transnational philosophy and agenda – explained by Ayman al-Zawahiri in his message of 3 November 2007:

Islamic nation of resistance and *jihad* (holy war) in the Maghreb, see how your children are uniting under the banner of Islam and *jihad* against the United States, France and Spain (...) Support (...) your children in fighting our enemies and cleansing our lands of their slaves [Moamer] Kadhafi, Zine El Abidine [Ben Ali], [President Abdelaziz] Bouteflika and [King] Mohammed VI (AFP 2007y).

While continuing its domestic campaign, the focus includes Western interests. It remains doubtful that *al-Qa'eda* has any direct operational link with the Algerian and Libyan organizations – in which all operations must first be sanctioned by the *al-Qa'eda* leadership – but rather that an ideological link exists goes without saying.

Lessons applicable to countries that do not consider terrorism to be a significant threat include the following:

- The threat of terrorism cannot and should not be measured by the number of members or the strength of an organisation but rather by the

willingness of individuals to align themselves to a philosophy in which terrorism is portrayed as the only viable strategy

- The real threat of terrorism essentially comes in small packages

The challenge for countries in North Africa remains not to use threats of terrorism and religious extremism as a pretext to crack down on peaceful dissent or to limit political development in an attempt to stay in power. If states continue to limit democracy, to postpone reforms or to engage in the politics of self-enrichment, the potential growth of extremist movements, permeate with a *jihadist* worldview, is likely to increase.

Based on number of activities, Algeria is often considered as the country of primary concern. Notwithstanding this view, Morocco and Tunisia should be carefully monitored.

Unfortunately, a realistic analysis of the events of 2007 indicates that we have by no means heard or seen the last of terrorism in North Africa. Domestic and international circumstances, as well as the power of the internet, are likely to further facilitate radicalisation and terrorism. Although acts of terrorism may be sporadic, the threat is constant.

ANNEX

GUANTANAMO BAY DETAINEES

Name	Citizenship	Place of birth	Date of birth
Algeria			
Abdenour, Sameur	Algeria	Algiers, Algeria	28 March 1973
Ait Idr, Mustafa	Algeria	Sidimhamed, Algeria	9 July 1970
Al Hajj, Boudella	Algeria	Laghouat, Algeria	18 April 1965
Al Qadir, Mohammed Abd Al	Algeria	Taot, Algeria	12 May 1976
Ameur, Mammar	Algeria	L'aghouat, Algeria	1 December 1958
Ameziane, Djamel Saïid Ali	Algeria	Al Jesera, Algeria	14 April 1967
Barhoumi, Sufyian	Algeria	Algiers, Algeria	28 July 1973
Bel Bacha, Ahmed Bin Saleh	Algeria	Algiers, Algeria	13 November 1969
Belkacem, Bensayah	Algeria	Wargala, Algeria	10 September 1962
Bin Hamlili, Adil Hadi Al Jazairi	Algeria	Oram, Algeria	26 June 1975
Boumediene, Lakhdar	Algeria	Ain Soltgane Saeda, Algeria	27 April 1966
Fahri, Saïid	Algeria	Churchelle, Algeria	29 March 1961
Feghoul, Abdulli	Algeria	Tiaret, Algeria	22 October 1960
Hadjarab, Nabil	Algeria	Aentaya, Algeria	21 July 1979
Hamlily, Mustafa Ahmed	Algeria	Bashare, Algeria	20 February 1959
Houari, Abdul Raham	Algeria	Algiers, Algeria	18 January 1980
Husseini, Abdallah	Algeria	Algiers, Algeria	3 April 1958
Huwari, Soufian Abar	Algeria	Ouran, Algeria	29 April 1970
Lahmar, Sabir Mahfouz	Algeria	Constantin, Algeria	22 May 1969
Naji, Aziz Abdul	Algeria	Batna, Algeria	4 May 1975
Nechle, Mohammed	Algeria	Laghouat, Algeria	2 April 1968
Said, Hassan Mujamma Rabai	Algeria	Oum el Bouaghi, Algeria	5 February 1976
Sayab, Mutij Sadiz Ahmad	Algeria	Unknown	1 July 1976
Zumiri, Hassan	Algeria	Algiers, Algeria	8 September 1967

Name	Citizenship	Place of birth	Date of birth
Morocco			
Achab Kanouni, Imad	France	Casablanca, MO	6 March 1977
Ahmad, Abdullah Tabarak	Morocco	Casablanca, MO	12 December 1955
Awzar, Mohamed Ibrahim	Morocco	Koreebja, MO	28 September 1979
Ben Moujan, Muhammad	Morocco	Dar Bid'a, MO	14 February 1981
Ikasrin, Laacin	Morocco	Targist, MO	2 October 1972
Lahassimi, Najib Mohammad	Morocco	Sattat, MO	28 September 1978
Mizouz, Mohammed	Morocco	Casablanca, MO	31 December 1973
Nasir, Abdul Latif	Morocco	Casablanca, MO	4 March 1965
Rashidi, Ahmed	Morocco	Tanjier, MO	16 March 1966
Shakaran, Ibrahim Bin	Morocco	Casablanca, MO	4 August 1979
Shokuri, Yunis Abdurrahman	Morocco	Asafi, MO	5 April 1968
Souleimani Laalmaj, Mohamad	Morocco	Casablanca, MO	9 January 1976
Tunisia			
Abdallah, Sayf Bin	Tunisia	Menzil, Tunisia	24 June 1973
Al Hami, Rafiq Bin Bashir Bin Jalud	Tunisia	Omaron, Tunisia	4 March 1969
Al Yazidi, Ridah Bin Saleh	Tunisia	Unfidel, Tunisia	24 January 1965
Bin Hadiddi, Abdul Haddi	Tunisia	Bir'Alash, Tunisia	18 March 1969
Bin Hamida, Adil Mabrouk	Tunisia	Tunis, Tunisia	15 September 1970
Hkiml, Adel Ahmed Bin Ibrahim	Tunisia	Bin Aroes, Tunisia	27 March 1965
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